

**JOHN WALSH**  
MIDLIFE CRISIS OF  
A PUNK ICON

THE MAGAZINE



**HOLIDAY HEAVEN**  
THE BEST PLACES  
TO CHILL OUT

TIME OFF



**GIRL TROUBLE**  
GI JANE GETS HER  
MARCHING ORDERS

COMMENT, PAGE 17

# THE INDEPENDENT

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Saturday 9 May 1998 70p (IR 70p) No 3,606 \*

## Minister rocked by mercenaries' revelations

By Fran Abrams and Andrew Buncorn

THE Foreign Office minister Tony Lloyd was under increasing pressure last night as new revelations pointed to an embarrassingly close relationship between officials and mercenaries who ousted the regime in the African state of Sierra Leone.

Mr Lloyd was forced to admit that there were "points to correct" in information he had given to a Commons select committee earlier this week, when he said he had only recently been told that a investigation into the matter had been launched. He admitted yesterday that the matter had been passed to him "for noting" but he failed to notice it.

Mr Lloyd's admission came as solicitors acting for Sandline International released a letter which claimed that they had liaised very closely with senior British officials over their operation to help reinstate the ousted president of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

Sandline, which is headed by former army officer Lt-Col Tim Spicer, is under investigation by Customs and Excise for alleged breaches of a United Nations arms embargo, but has insisted it was acting with government approval.

The company released a "strictly private" letter, sent to Robin Cook on 24 April, claiming the Foreign Secretary had breached its confidential nature when he referred to it in the Commons on 6 May.

The *Independent* revealed earlier

this week that Sandline had a series of meetings with Foreign Office officials just weeks before it arranged a shipment of arms to Sierra Leone, to help President Kabbah, who was ousted last May in a coup led by Johnny Paul Koroma. It was also revealed last week that officers from HM Customs and Excise had launched an investigation into whether the shipment had broken UN and EU embargoes, and the possible role of British officials.

Inside  
How mercenaries met Foreign Office officials, page 2  
Leading article, page 16

The letter claims that Sandline met with up to four named officials from the Foreign Office. It also claims that it carried out similar briefings with US officials as well as senior military officers in west Africa.

Sandline said it had been recommended to President Kabbah by its friend Peter Penfold, the High Commissioner to Sierra Leone. Mr Penfold is due to be questioned by Customs officers.

While there is no evidence that ministers knew about Sandline's operation or of their contact with officials, the affair is becoming increasingly embarrassing for the Government - suggesting as it does, a failure of communication within the Foreign Office. Mr Lloyd told a Com-

mons select committee on Tuesday that he did not know of a Customs investigation into the shipping of arms to Mr Kabbah's soldiers until last Friday. Mr Cook told the Commons the following day that Mr Lloyd had been given the information "for noting" two weeks earlier.

Although there is no suggestion that Mr Lloyd deliberately misled the committee, Tory MPs said last night that he had failed to apologise and would have to go. The most likely explanation was that his officials failed to draw the matter to his attention and he did not read his briefs properly.

David Wilshire, one of the MPs whose question about the Sandline affair floored Mr Lloyd when he appeared before the committee, has formally asked for him to be recalled. He said yesterday's statement was "a pathetic little apology" and was not good enough.

"Someone's going to have to be the fall guy and resign," he said.

In a letter to Donald Anderson, chairman of the committee, Mr Lloyd said he had nothing to add to what the Foreign Secretary had said. "When I returned to the office and checked all the papers I discovered that there were, indeed, points to correct. I discussed these with Robin Cook and particularly asked him to set the record straight," he said.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said Mr Blair had every confidence in Mr Lloyd. Senior aides at the Foreign Office also maintained that he would not be forced to resign.



Hot water: 'The Burning Man' towers over 75 brave souls in the Devil's Pulpit who opted to wade the river gorge in a performance of 'The Secret Sign' by the Glasgow-based rva. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

**Doctor on the run after nurse shot dead**

By Jason Bennett  
Crime Correspondent

A NATION-WIDE hunt was under way last night for a doctor, described as armed and dangerous, who went on the run after his girlfriend was shot in a pub car-park.

Thomas Shanks, 47, is wanted for questioning about the killing of Vicki Fletcher, a nurse, who was attacked in Castleford, West Yorkshire, on Thursday by a gunman. The anaesthetist - who was awarded a medal for an act of heroism while with the SAS during the 1970s guerrilla war in Yemen, according to a former member of the unit - worked at the same hospital as Ms Fletcher, who was 21, and with whom he was described as having a fiery relationship.

Police closed a school where Dr Shanks's ex-wife, Julie, works, and took her and her daughter into police protection. Dr Shanks phoned his former wife on Thursday. He and Ms Fletcher worked at Pontefract General Infirmary, where the nurse died of wounds to her back, arms and legs early yesterday.

She was with friends in Castlefields pub before the attack. Stephen Thackray, manager, said she saw the gunman's face at the window and went out to see him.

"Shots were firing everywhere ... the firing went on, then we saw the man casually walk back to his car, get into it and calmly drive away. We ... just tried to stop the bleeding; there was nothing else we could do but wait for the ambulance."

Ms Fletcher, trying to flee, scaled metal railings and was heading back to the pub entrance when the man fired a second burst, leaving her dying on the ground. There were reports of a row at a pub in which the doctor may have been involved the night before the shooting.

Quiet drink, page 5

## Lawrence murder corruption claim

By Kathy Marks

THE investigation into the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence was obstructed by links between a Metropolitan Police officer and a notorious south London criminal whose son was a suspect, it was alleged yesterday.

Michael Mansfield QC, counsel for the Lawrence family, told the public inquiry into Stephen's death that this was the inference to be drawn from the failure by detectives to act on early tip-offs about the identity of the killers.

The inquiry was abruptly adjourned yesterday to permit the highest-ranking officer in the case to consult their

lawyers, after Mr Mansfield indicated that he planned to raise the possibility of a conspiracy among them to subvert the murder investigation. It will not now sit again until Wednesday.

The allegations of corruption came during questioning of Detective Sergeant Christopher Crowley, who discredited vital identification evidence, leading to the collapse of a private prosecution brought by Stephen's parents, Neville and Doreen.

They revolved around Clifford Norris, father of David Norris, one of five youths charged with killing Stephen. The inquiry has heard that Norris was a dangerous criminal who was known to buy off witnesses and jurors

and, according to rumour, police officers.

David Norris was one name

repeatedly mentioned by police informants soon after Stephen was stabbed to death in Eltham, south London, by a white gang in 1993. Others included Neil and Jamie Acourt, whose three uncles, from a family called Stewart, were criminal associates of Clifford Norris. Despite the deluge of tips received by detectives, no arrests were made for two weeks.

Mr Mansfield said he was not suggesting that DS Crowley had connections to the Norris family. "What we do infer from the circumstances of this case, given the way in which the intelligence was not

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IN TOMORROW'S  
INDEPENDENT  
ON SUNDAY

■ Why I hate America: John Carlin, our man in Washington, delivers his devastating farewell to the USA

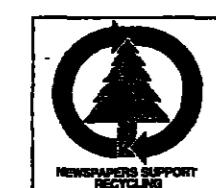
■ Festival folk: A who's who of Cannes

■ Up here from Down Under: The girls from Oz with balls as well as beauty

■ The extended family reborn: Meet my friends, relations, offspring, au pair, lodger, and next-door-neighbours

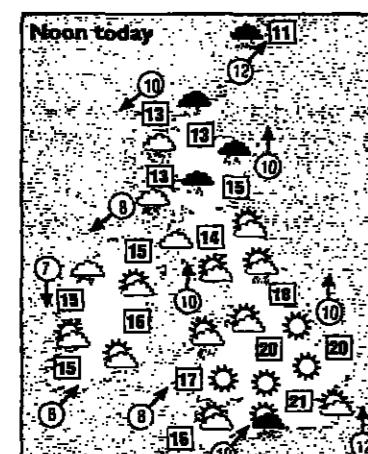
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TV & radio	The Eye



Recycled paper made up  
41.4% of the raw material for  
UK newspapers in the  
first half of 1997.

WEATHER

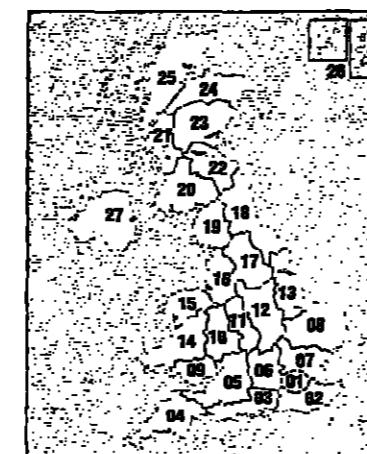


A band of rain will be slowly moving north across Scotland and N. Ireland, but the rain will pass out in southern Scotland and most parts of N. Ireland in the afternoon with a little sunshine coming through. England and Wales will have a warm, humid and sunny day but cloud will build during the afternoon with localized thunder showers. Central and southern England are at greatest risk of seeing a thunderstorm in the late afternoon and evening.

**Outlook for the next few days**  
There is the risk of the odd light shower in northern and western Scotland but elsewhere in Scotland it will be dry. N. Ireland and northern England will also be dry with sunny spells. However, Wales and southern England will be warm and muggy with showers and localized thunder showers. Monday will see heavy rain move north across England and Wales but Scotland and N. Ireland will be dry with sunny spells.

**British Isles weather**

most recent available figures at noon local time  
Cloudy: C; clear: F; fog: Fg; haze: M; rain: R; S; sunny: S; snow: Sn; showers: Sh; thunder: Thundersh.  
Aberdeen F 1457 Gourock C 1763  
Anglesey C 1355 Inverness F 1457  
Ayr C 1254 Ipswich C 1966  
Belfast Sh 1152 Isles of Scilly S 1355  
Birmingham F 1763 Jersey C 1864  
Blackpool F 1559 Liverpool F 1658  
Bournemouth C 1559 London C 2272  
Brighton S 1661 Manchester C 1763  
Bristol C 1966 Newcastle C 1254  
Cardiff F 1559 Oxford C 1664  
Carlisle F 1050 Plymouth C 1763  
Dover F 2068 Scarborough F 1457  
Dublin Ir 1050 Southampton C 1763  
Edinburgh C 1457 Southeast S 1966  
Exeter F 1559 St Asaph S 1752  
Glasgow C 1254 York C 1661



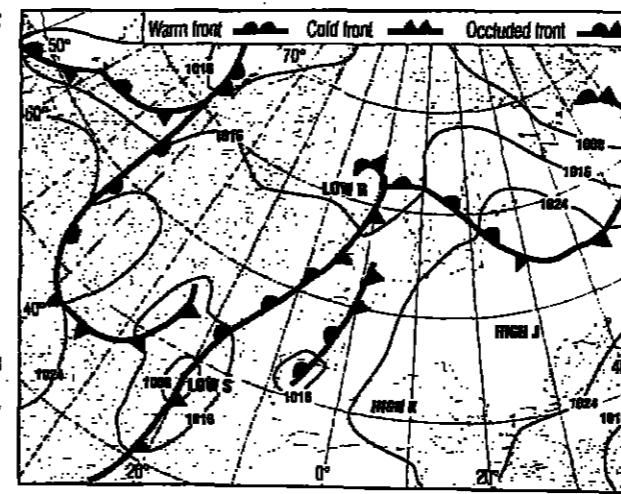
Call 0836 491777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT)

Cut and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0836 491777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT)

Atlantic chart,  
noon today

Low pressure areas 8 and 9 will both move north-eastwards and deepen. High J and K are almost stationary.



INDEPENDENT Weatherline

For the latest forecasts dial 0891 50009 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT)

Air quality

Outlook for today

London

S England

Wales

Scotland

N Ireland

High tides

AM

HT

PM

HT

London

Liverpool

Mod

Good

Good

Good

Good

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London

Liverpool

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Good

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London

Hull (Albert Dock)

Mod

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London

Greenwich

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London

Dun Laoghaire

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Portsmouth

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## The bootleggers who strike discord

Some bands give away their unofficial recordings, but is this just a smart move against piracy? Fiona Sturges reports



Witness: Former Beatle George Harrison this week, as the 'dead boring' copyright case continued. Photograph: PA

SO that's that. At the end of a long and winding saga, the former members of the Beatles yesterday won their court case, and *Lingasong Music* of Waltham Abbey, Essex, will not be able to release CDs of the group's 1962 performance in the Star Club in Hamburg.

But other musicians are often perfectly happy to hand out unofficial recordings. Some even make a point of it.

At a concert just last week at the Hanover Grand in London, Money Mark (better known as the Beastie Boys' keyboard player) sat a tape recorder on his keyboard and taped himself performing his most popular track, "Cry". At the end of the song he threw the tape into the audience, saying, "I've made a bootleg copy of this song in every city that I played."

Money Mark is by no means the first musician openly to endorse bootlegging. The cult Sixties psychedelic band, the Grateful Dead, were outspoken in their approval of music piracy, viewing it as part of the creative process, while Eighties rock outfit Dire Straits distribute bootlegs via their fan club.

But what is ostensibly an acceptance of this illegal practice

may be a smart ploy to put pirates out of business. Artists who bring out their own free unofficial recordings leave little room for bootlegged editions. Before a concert on Radio One in 1991, U2 distributed blank tapes complete with track listings and covers so that fans could make their own recording.

Illegal tapes can, on the other hand, create a market for concert recordings or unreleased tracks from which record companies and artists can benefit. Illegal recordings of Bob Dylan concerts had long been distributed until Colombia released two box-sets — *Biograph* and *The Bootleg Series 1-3* — in 1991. These contained the same bootlegs that were being sold illegally, but a superior quality.

Since the updating of copyright laws in 1988 record companies have come down hard on perpetrators.

Last year Oasis battled with illegal versions of their album *Be Here Now*, offered on the Internet before its release. A fan, Steve Pockett, had pirated songs from a preview tape and left a message on an Oasis website offering copies. Creation

and Sooty issued a writ claiming colossal damages. The law now says that copyright generally lasts for the life of the author, plus 70 years after his/her death. The Act also outlaws the selling and distributing of any sound recordings without the consent of the artist and/or record company.

And it's not just the fans who get caught out. The Verve were forced to hand over all their royalties for "Bitter Sweet Symphony" to Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and former manager Allen Klein after us-

ing an orchestral version of the Stones' "The Last Time" even though the reference was felt to be "subliminal" by lead singer Richard Ashcroft.

The British Phonographic Institute's anti-piracy library has compiled a list of the most bootlegged artists in the UK. Needless to say, the Beatles are at the top of it with a staggering 280 titles. They are closely followed by Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Nirvana, Elvis Presley, Oasis and Tori Amos.

Dance acts have also come

ing over sampling, an area of bootlegging where the legislation is still unclear. Musicians have been caught out assuming that their samples are undetectable or too obscure. The KLF (Copyright Liberation Front) illegally used Abba samples in their 1987 album *What the Fuck Is Going On?* — they ended up taking thousands of recalled copies to Sweden and publicly burning them in a pyre. The album was later released without samples. The result is a mostly silent recording, with instructions showing how

to rebuild the original album with your own samples. But where established acts can afford the cost of sampling, others find it financially crippling. Blueboy's first chart-topping track "Remember Me" samples US jazz musician Marlene Shaw's "Woman in the Ghetto". In handing over 25 per cent of royalties, Blueboy believe the sample to have cost them £250,000. Antony Johnson, managing director of their label, Pharn Records, said: "Blueboy have made a classic out of a record nobody knew."

## Cheap-calls pioneer set to ring up £100m from telecoms sale

By Peter Thel Larsen

A FORMER actor who brought cheap international calls to thousands of telephone users is set to pocket about £100m by selling his company to a Japanese telecoms giant

Tom McCabe, who played bit parts in *Minder* and ran a telephone dating agency before founding Swiftcall in 1993, is currently understood to be negotiating the sale to KDD, the Japanese telecoms operator. A deal could be announced as early as next week.

Swiftcall has grown rapidly by offering cheap international telephone calls, undercutting established operators such as British Telecom and Mercury.

It currently has 250,000 customers and last year sold 1.5m pre-paid telephone cards which offer users international calls at rates up to 50 per cent cheaper than BT. It has recently started offering similar services in the US and Ireland.

Swiftcall currently offers calls to the United States at just



Tom McCabe: Abandoned flotation for outright sale

12p a minute, while BT charges 24p. A call to France costs 14p a minute, compared to 28p with BT.

Mr McCabe's achievement is all the more impressive because Swiftcall does not own its own telephone lines.

It is what is known in the industry as a reseller, renting large chunks of capacity from existing operators, and then

selling it through aggressive marketing campaigns.

Swiftcall had been preparing a stock-market flotation in London or New York. However, Mr McCabe has now decided to sell the company outright.

Last year, Mr McCabe, who owns 100 per cent of Swiftcall, gave KDD an option to take a 20 per cent stake in the company.

Swiftcall was the first reseller to enter the market, effectively breaking the monopoly held by BT and Mercury and forcing them to cut international call charges.

It has since been followed by a slew of other operators such as First Telecom which have begun to offer similar call rates.

However, industry analysts are concerned that, as competition increases, the resellers will be squeezed.

Swiftcall's growth has slowed dramatically in recent years. In the 12 months to the end of May, the company is likely to have made revenues of £27m, compared to £24m last year.



The way forward: Railtrack reveals its latest device to tackle the autumn menace of recalcitrant leaves on the line. Photograph: Tim Vickery/National Pictures

## Unveiled: a weapon to clear the wrong sort of leaves off the line

RAIL chiefs yesterday rolled out the latest device to tackle that bane of passengers' lives — leaves on the line. Railtrack's new £1m multi-purpose track machine will deal not only with leaves but ice, weeds and debris.

The new machine, displayed at Waterloo Station in London and then demonstrated at nearby Clapham Junction, has high-

pressure water jets to clear lines. Once the jets have gone into action, it puts sandite — a sticky gel-like substance — on the line to stop wheels sliding. The first of 25 models will come into service in August 1999, with others being gradually introduced until the end of 2000.

"Leaves will always fall on the line, but the new machines

will help us keep the tracks clear and make autumn train travel more punctual," said Brian Melfitt, Railtrack's engineering and production director.

The concept vehicle was developed by Amec Rail of Croydon, Surrey, which is part of the consortium building the new fleet. The production model will be built by Windhoff of Germany.

## Hit-man who took pity on female victim gets two years in prison

A HIT-MAN who spared his female victim after losing his nerve was jailed for two and a half years yesterday.

Orville Wright, 26, had agreed a £4,000 fee from his intended victim's former lover for carrying out the murder — with the promise of an extra £1,000 if he did it right, an Old Bailey court was told.

Former legal clerk Wright, his face masked by a balaclava, helmet, and brandishing a knife, broke into the woman's flat in Tottenham, north London.

But after talking to the intended victim, Theresa Pitkin, 30, a mother of three, he told her he could not go through with it. Ms Pitkin had told the court: "I thought he was going

to rape me but then he told me he had been contracted to kill me."

At first Wright said he had been fired by a friend of her ex-lover's to cripple her. But then he said the ex-lover, 30-year-old David Martin, had contacted him and ordered her murder.

Mr Martin has not been charged and denies any in-

volvement. Ms Pitkin kept Wright talking and eventually he lost his nerve and decided not to go through with the killing.

Mark Hill, prosecuting, said: "He was a hit-man about to carry out the killing and that he did not do it is a great relief to Miss Pitkin and others. He is a man who lost his nerve."

Wright, of Bruce Grove,

north London, was found guilty last month of aggravated burglary with intent to cause grievous bodily harm.

He said he went into the flat to warn Ms Pitkin about the contract killing but never intended to carry it out.

Mark Pallenberg, defending,

said Ms Pitkin and her mother had forgiven Wright — and even offered to buy a ticket so he could return to Jamaica.

Judge David Murchie said he had reduced Wright's sentence because of the unusual circumstances of the case.

The judge told Wright, who worked in Jamaica for seven years as a legal clerk: "I can't forget her words that you were a hit-man who lost his nerve."

## This week

"There are more interesting things than sport on a Saturday afternoon. Murder, for instance."

THE SATURDAY PLAY continues with "The Black Spectacles", Sir Donald Sinden plays John Dickson Carr's sleuth, Dr Gideon Fell, in a thoroughly engrossing whodunit. This afternoon, 3.02 – 4.00.

"Ssshhh! This is strictly off the record."

WESTMINSTER HOUR. At the end of the programme, Simon Hoggart shares the secrets of Westminster with the rest of Britain in "It's a Funny Old World" Sunday evenings from 10 May, 10.45 – 11.00.

"What kind of loving would you expect from Mr Bean?"

BOOK AT BEDTIME continues with Sean Bean reading "A Kind of Loving", Stan Barstow's tale of love in Yorkshire. Weekday evenings from Monday 11 May, 10.45 – 11.00.

"Ever heard of a talk show host with more problems than her audience?"

THE EMERALD GREEN SHOW. Alcoholism, Adoption, Analysts. And that's before Emerald even goes to work. New comedy on Tuesday mornings from 12 May, 11.30 – 12.00.

"It used to be penniless students. Now it's skint parents."

THE LEARNING CURVE. Libby Purves describes the best university courses, campuses and value for money. Tuesday afternoons, 12 May, 4.02 – 4.30.

"The Moral Maze: Where there are at least three sides to every story."

THE MORAL MAZE. An ethical debate where nothing is black and white. Michael Buerk tries not to provide any answers. Wednesday evenings from 13 May, 8.02 – 8.45. Repeated Saturday evenings, 10.15.

"How interesting. Radio 4 talks about the weather."

STRANGE WEATHER DAYS. From summer snow to walls of water to freak tornadoes. You'll never complain about the weather again. Thursday mornings from 14 May, 9.30 – 9.45.

BBC RADIO 4

92-95FM & 198LW

YOU'LL SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY.

# Jails to take softer line on cannabis

By Ian Burrell  
Home Affairs Correspondent

PRISON governors are to be urged to take a softer line against prisoners using cannabis as part of a new government strategy on drug use in prison.

Instead, more resources will be directed at tackling heroin users by subjecting them to repeated drug-testing and greater punishments.

The *Independent* has acquired a copy of the 23-page review document which forms the basis for the new strategy, which will be announced on Tuesday by drugs minister George Howarth.

Prison service officials have been concerned that the large-scale use of mandatory drug-testing has led to thousands of drug-using inmates being given up to 35 "extra days" on their sentence. More than 16,500 prisoners - mostly cannabis users - were given punishments of extra days in the last financial year. This is

equivalent to filling one and a half jails for a year at a cost of £10m.

Governors are to be urged to "distinguish between drug markets which generate the most harm to individuals and prisoner safety and those that are less damaging". They are advised to "increase the differential" between punishments for cannabis and for Class A drugs and to consider alternative punishments such as loss of privileges and restrictions on visits.

Both staff and prisoners indicated in the report that they believe the system bears down too heavily on cannabis users. It states that 82 per cent of prisoners agreed with the statement: "People should be able to smoke cannabis in prison without fear of punishment."

The review adds that "more surprisingly perhaps, interviews with wing officers revealed ambivalent attitudes to reporting prisoners for smoking cannabis". Some 44 per cent of staff agreed with the statement:

"Personal use of cannabis is not detrimental to good order and discipline".

The review makes clear that drugs policies in prison will fall into line with those recently announced by "drugs tsar" Keith Hellawell for the wider public. This means a shift in emphasis towards improved drug treatment and education in order to reduce demand.

The report carries some positive findings on the extent of drug use in prison, which was running out of control only two years ago. Positive drug tests among prisoners have fallen from 34.6 per cent in December 1995 to less than 20 per cent in the early months of this year.

The mandatory random drug-testing programme, which requires some 10 per cent of inmates to be tested, is expensive. The review recommends that governors reduce the amount of mandatory testing and concentrate resources on inmates who have previously been found to misuse a Class A drug.



Churchman's holiday: the Bishop of Willesden, the Rt Rev Graham Dow, working as a conductor on Metrolink's route 28 from Willesden to Holborn yesterday as part of a 'Faith in Work' initiative

Photograph: R. Watt

## Acne drug is safe - experts

By Jeremy Lawrence  
Health Editor

EXPERTS warned yesterday that a backlash against the acne drug, Roaccutane, following reports of 24 cases in which the patients' mental state improved when taken off the therapy and worsened when therapy re-started. A spokesman for the FDA said: "It is us that is

drug, but says there is no proof that Roaccutane was the cause.

It agreed the change to the American labelling with the US Food and Drug Administration following reports of 24 cases in which the patients' mental state improved when taken off the therapy and worsened when therapy re-started. A spokesman for the FDA said: "It is us that is

an important clue."

Dr Hywel Williams, consultant dermatologist at University Hospital, Nottingham, who specialises in adolescent acne said he had treated more than 1,000 patients with Roaccutane.

"Many patients with acne are profoundly depressed. My gut feeling is the risk of mental illness is far greater from withholding Roaccutane than from giving it appropriately."

"Of the patients I have treated, the thing they have volunteered about their mood is that they feel a damn sight better because, having struggled with the disease for years, at last they have found something that shifts it."

## Child-porn nurse banned

A MALE nurse convicted on obscenity charges as a result of investigations into paedophile activity at Ashworth Hospital was struck off his professional register. William Baird, of St Helens, Merseyside, was found guilty of professional misconduct at a hearing in London. He was convicted in 1994 of possessing child pornography and fined £250 for each of two offences of possessing indecent photographs of a child under the age of 16. He was also fined £500 for making, signing or delivering an untrue declaration to avoid paying customs duty.

## 'Bill' star in cuffs in court

BILLY MURRAY, a star of *The Bill*, appeared in handcuffs at Grays Magistrates Court, Essex, yesterday to face a charge of intimidating Andrew Joyce, 20, intending to obstruct or interfere with the course of justice. The case was adjourned to next month and Mr Murray was bailed. He was already on unconditional bail on two charges of common assault and one of violent disorder after an alleged incident involving Mr Joyce and Bryan Basquill, 22.

## Firm defends standards

A BUTCHER'S son yesterday rejected a claim that the family firm tried to hide the scale of its wholesale business at the time of the world's worst outbreak of *E. coli* O157 food poisoning, which claimed 21 lives. Martin Barr, 30, denied that John M Barr and Son was a big-scale operator in the supply of cooked meats. He said that hygiene practices were no different to other butchers' shops.

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1000 spin

## Quiet drink that ended in murder

By Jason Bennetto  
Crime Correspondent

WHAT started out as a quiet evening drink with friends at a West Yorkshire pub ended in a nationwide murder hunt for a doctor on the run.

The bloody chain of events began simply enough as Vicki Fletcher, 21, relaxed at the Castlefields public house in Castleford on Thursday night.

Stephen Thackray, the pub's manager, recalled Ms Fletcher seeing a man she knew standing outside in the car park, looking through the window.

"She went outside to meet him and then all hell broke loose. Shots were firing everywhere, and everyone dived for cover. Everyone was shouting 'get down, get down'.

"There were about 80 people inside the pub and bullets came straight through the inner doors and went into the bar. Glass and mirrors were shattered. It's miraculous no one else was hit."

Dawn Sanders, 33, took up the story: "I heard three shots and then



Wanted man: Police are seeking Dr Thomas Shanks

another three and went dashing out, and saw the girl lying on the ground.

"She had been hit in the stomach and leg. Somebody tried to find a pulse and it was very faint.

"People were holding her hand and stroking it, telling her to hold on, but she was unconscious.

"Somebody from the pub rushed out with a dressing which they put on her side. There was blood every-

where; she was lying in a pool of blood - it was horrific."

Mr Thackray said that following the shooting he saw the gunman "casually walk back to his car, get into it and calmly drive away".

Ms Fletcher had managed to climb over metal railings and was heading back to the pub's entrance when the gunman fired again, leaving her dying on the ground.

Spent cartridge cases from a large automatic weapon littered the ground at the scene of the shooting yesterday and bullet marks could be seen in the brick wall of the pub and in the wooden window frames, next to a shattered window.

Police released the name of an anaesthetist, Dr Thomas Shanks, 47, who worked with Ms Fletcher at Pontefract General Infirmary, where the nurse died early yesterday of

wounds to her back, arms and legs.

The couple had been having a stormy though long-standing relationship and are believed to have been involved in a heated row at a pub the night before the shooting.

Police said that Dr Shanks, a former Army officer, was "armed and

dangerous", and warned the public not to approach him.

As a precaution, officers closed Kings Heath junior, infant and nursery schools, where the doctor's estranged wife works, and took Dr Shanks's nine-year-old daughter out of her school. Other relatives were also moved from their homes to other accommodation.

Armed police spent the afternoon watching the flat in the hospital grounds where Dr Shanks lived with Ms Fletcher, but the anaesthetist was not inside.

Miss Fletcher was described as an attractive, popular young woman who trained as a student nurse at Pontefract General Infirmary and had worked there as a state registered nurse since September 1997.

A medical colleague said the doctor was a lively, outgoing person who claimed to have been in the SAS before going to medical school, although the Ministry of Defence would only confirm that he had been a soldier in the Army. He joined in 1968 and left in 1978. He re-enlisted as a doctor in 1983 and was discharged in 1991.

The doctor, who has worked at Pontefract General Infirmary since January 1995, and lived in hospital accommodation there, was reported to have been seen in Pontefract at 8.55am yesterday.

Police said that they were still checking out reports of his sighting, and that searches for his car had so far proved fruitless.

The doctor was described yesterday as a "typical, tough Scot", who was "very fit", and did not "suffer fools gladly".

One neighbour said: "He lived with a pretty, blonde girl, but they were people I never saw close up. I thought he had a good position - he was fit, he had a good job and he seemed to be all right."

"On the face of it, he was a lucky fellow."



Victim: Vicki Fletcher, 21, a nurse, was shot dead outside a pub

## Police hunt bomb suspect

By Steve Boggan

A WARRANT was issued for the arrest of an Iranian physicist yesterday after a parcel-bomb explosion in which a private detective and his wife were hurt.

Michael Coyne, a 63-year-old former policeman, and his wife, Margaret, were said to be stable in hospital last night as detectives began an international search for Cyrus Ghiaffy, 57, whose car was found at Heathrow Airport hours after the blast.

The device, which exploded at the Coyne's home in Dundee, was one of three handed in to a TNT parcel delivery office in Thetford, Norfolk, on Thursday. The two others, addressed to intended victims in Kent and Fife, were defused by bomb disposal experts. One was dressed to Derek Lawson, 49, a former solicitor in Dundee.

Dundee Sheriff Court issued the arrest warrant yesterday afternoon. It is understood that Mr Coyne had been involved in investigating a civil case in which Mr Ghiaffy was involved.

Detective Chief Superintendent Tom Ross said Mr Ghiaffy had a number of business

interests in the area, although he refused to say whether these might provide a possible motive for the parcel-bomb attacks.

"I would regard anyone who engages in activities like these as dangerous," he said.

He should not be approached, but anyone with information to his whereabouts should contact the police immediately."

A spokeswoman for Tayside police said there was no terrorist motive in the attack.

She said the discovery of Mr Ghiaffy's car at Heathrow Airport meant police were considering the strong possibility that he was no longer in the country.

He is described as 5ft 6ins tall, of a thin build and of Asian appearance with a pock-marked face.

He lived in the St Andrews area of Fife but police would not say whether he had worked as a physicist at the university.

"The fact that he is a physicist and the fact that he is Iranian should not be misconstrued as terrorism," the spokeswoman said. She said there appeared to be a link to a previous civil case.

Mr and Mrs Coyne were reported to be conscious and not seriously injured last night.

## Unions make point over low turnout

By Barrie Clement  
Labour Editor

A LOW election turnout has destroyed Tony Blair's argument about high participation before unions are granted recognition, senior union leaders declared yesterday.

Less than 25 per cent of Londoners voted for a mayor and a new council for London, but the Prime Minister is insisting on a 40 per cent "yes" vote at a workplace before collective bargaining is backed by law. John Monks, TUC leader, joined John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB general union, yesterday in attempting to expose "double standards".

Some union sources believed that predictions of a low turnout had persuaded Downing Street to postpone discussion of the White Paper until next week.

John Monks said on Radio 4: "Less than a quarter of Londoners voted for the introduction of the mayor, but that's going to be enough for the Government. I'm hoping that it will take the same view as far as unions are concerned."

In private the unions have conceded the principle by suggesting a 30 per cent "yes" vote instead of 40 per cent. But union leaders refused to compromise on other issues in the "fairness at work" White Paper.

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THE END

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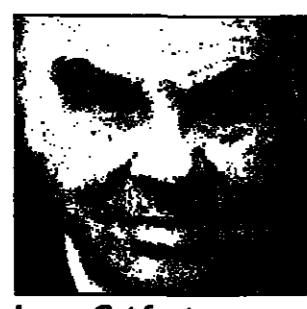
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# Palace drops hint that chaplain should resign



By Clare Garner  
and Anthony Bevins

CANON Eric James, an Extra Chaplain to the Queen, yesterday stood by his controversial remarks about the merits of an elected head of state, despite a frosty response from Buckingham Palace.

The Palace - which had been attacked for "toadying

sycophancy" by the outspoken canon - delivered a most subtle hint that the Extra Chaplain's resignation might be in order. Certainly, if offered, it appeared that it would be accepted with grateful alacrity.

A Palace spokesman commented on Canon James's declaration that it was time "for a profound reflection upon, and reconsideration of, the

role of the monarch", with the statement: "How he reconciles these comments with his position as Extra Chaplain to the Queen is a matter for him."

But Canon James said yesterday that he had no intention of resigning from his post. "I want to agree that it's my own affair," he said. "I stand by all I've said. We shall wait and see for a little while."

Canon James was a fully fledged chaplain to the Queen between 1984 and 1995, when he reached the age of 70 and moved on to being an Extra Chaplain. He now preaches once a year at one of the royal chapels, most often in St James's Palace.

Most years he is invited to go on a "jolly" at Holyrood or Sandringham.

Yesterday, republicans welcomed the canon's remarks, particularly given the fact that they come from a member of the royal establishment. They hailed him as the first insider to break ranks.

But the equally outspoken Ann Widdecombe, the former Tory Minister who left the Church of England for the Roman Catholic church, said

yesterday that the canon should mind his own business.

"It's a pity that Canon Eric James doesn't confine himself to spiritual matters," she told *The Independent*.

"That he should waste such time on his theory of running the realm instead of getting on, spreading the gospel, which is what he's supposed to do, is a good example of how the

Church of England has lost its way."

Miss Widdecombe said that while women priests had been the final straw for her departure from the Church of England, "there had been a huge bundle of straw before that, some of which was this sort of thing - failure to concentrate on the spiritual, and an eternal desire to interfere in politics".

**Popular monarch:** The Queen meets residents of Poundbury in Dorset whose homes are built on land belonging to the Duchy of Cornwall

anomalous in a society increasingly preoccupied with democratic principles.

So perhaps James's words shouldn't be dismissed. The Canon is surely right to say that abdication should be regarded as an honourable choice. Could he also be right in thinking that the Monarchy would be strengthened, not weakened, by a formalised display of public feeling at the beginning of a reign?

Arguably, the referendum - an instrument literally used for other purposes - could be employed following a royal death to test and reinforce the Monarchy's legitimacy. At present, the throne passes from incumbent to heir at the moment of decease. But what if, hypothetically, the heir or heiress was judged by a majority of the public to be unsuitable? In modern conditions, the lack of any opportunity to voice dissent could seriously undermine the viability of the system. On the other hand, an open vote on the succession would encourage a healthy civic debate.

The beginnings of new reigns are almost always the time when the Monarchy is most popular - nostalgia and hope tend to mingle, in a royalist cocktail. So the risk to a new incumbent would be small, unless of course, there was a serious problem. Thus, medieval royalty may have relevance after all: a revived version of popular acclamation could tie the Monarchy even more securely into our democracy.



## The 'heredity lottery' that produces our monarchs

ONE year into Cool Britannia, can it be that a revolution is beginning to happen after all? A speech this week about the Monarchy, amplified in an article in yesterday's *Independent*, certainly indicates a mood shift in unexpected circles.

Canon Eric James, who delivered a lecture in Westminster Abbey on Thursday obscurely entitled "Spirituality, Shakespeare and Royalty", is a member of the exclusive club of former royal chaplains, a breed not given to iconoclasm. The Canon gave no quarter. But does what he said stand up? Once, such a pronouncement would have been dismissed as maverick. But times have changed.

In any case, much of what he said rang true. Because of the mass media, he pointed out, psychological pressures on royalty - especially on Diana, and now on her children - have become so intolerable that a normal emotional life is virtually impossible. Yet heirs and heiresses are given no choice about their "vocation". Heredity is a "lottery": there is no guarantee that any particular monarch will be up to the job. Meanwhile the "defender of the faith" role of the monarchy in a post-Anglican society needs re-examining.

Electing heirs to the throne might be good for democracy, writes Ben Pimlott

With some of this, it is hard not to agree. Nobody apart from tabloid editors would quarrel about the pressures. Nor are they new: the great constitutionalist Walter Bagehot made a similar point in the last century, when he argued that a Prince of Wales could be expected to be worse behaved than other people, because of the exceptional temptations of his position. Nor would many (apart from bishops, with burns on House of Lords seats) defend the exclusive relationship between a minority sect - the Church of England - and the head of state.

It was not these points, however, that excited the press, but a single sentence in the middle of the sermon. "In England, until 1213," declared the cleric, "the monarch was elected. Maybe the time is returning for election to the task and role."

Fingers tapped, cyberspace hummed. Well, why not? If we

are going to elect Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish assemblies, and a London mayor, if we are to have plebiscites on everything from local government to the future of our currency - why not go the whole hog? Above all - to paraphrase the Canon - it is surely illogical to abolish the hereditary principle of Lords, and not re-consider it in relation to heads of state.

However, the cases are not quite the same. The House of Lords is a law-making - or at any rate law-initiating, law-amending, and law-delaying - body. The Monarchy, by contrast, has become almost en-

tirely symbolic. There is also an additional difference. Being hereditary is neither a defining quality of a second chamber, nor a necessary one. It is, however, both a defining and necessary feature of a monarchy.

Curiously, Canon James links

his idea to ancient tradition. The comparison is false. In Saxon and Norman times, though successions were often disputed, the eldest son had a *prima facie* right, and - where there was a tussle - candidates were restricted to a tiny gene pool. Succeeding kings were not elected by the populace, but "acclaimed". Thus, when a new

ruler presented himself in the capital, citizens of London would roar their approval - a ritual maintained in the modern Coronation Service, which ends with the congregation shouting "May the Queen (or King) live for ever!" But those who had the power to affect a succession were powerful barons, not villains-in-the-street. Today the idea of business moguls (or ministers) making the decision wouldn't go down well.

Neither would a fight between the supporters of rival monarchs in the hustings. The prospect of fans of the Prince's Trust versus backers of the Save

the Children Fund doesn't sound promising. There is the option of a completely open contest for Buckingham Palace, in which anybody could stand either for a fixed-term occupant, or as Monarch-for-life. The latter system, however, would entrench out-of-touch gerontocrats, while the former amounts to settling up a royal public. That is one option, but it shouldn't be confused with reforming the Monarchy.

For if the institution has any point (and most people still think it has) it is in providing a Head of State who - though subject to regrettable psycho-

logical pressures - is not subject to everyday political ones. A King or Queen who had to worry about re-election would be a president by a different name.

And yet ... There is in the minds of many middle-of-the-road pro-Monarchy people a sense of unease about current arrangements. The system is certainly a lottery - it always has been. Indeed, it is the arbitrariness of heredity as a guiding principle that makes it tolerable. Nevertheless, the notion of elevating an individual to supreme formal authority, without any involvement by the public, maybe regarded as

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# US military acts to halt battle of sexes

Britain's armed forces are bringing the sexes together but, chastened by its own experiences, the US is thinking again. Andrew Marshall reports from Washington

**GI JOE** is back. The toy known as Action Man in Britain, which was deeply unfashionable for so many years, is back on shelves as an adult toy - sold in limited editions, with special spiffy uniforms.

But GI Joe can't play with GI Jane. That is the view of some of the distinguished men and women of the US Congress, who are trying to make sure that when Americans train for the military, they keep their fingers on their triggers.

The US military has become one of the most integrated professional forces in the world since 1993, when President Clinton cut away a screed of rules that kept women out of key positions. Now, women account for about 20 per cent of the strength of all the armed forces. They fly fighters and bombers, they serve on warships as gunnery officers, and 80 per cent of all jobs are open to them. They cannot (as yet) serve in the tightly confined spaces of submarines, where hot bunks are the rule, and they can't be Navy SEALS, Demi Moore notwithstanding. But everything else, they can and do.

Yet the rise and rise of women in uniform has been accompanied by scandal. The war between the sexes in the US military has become one of its key conflicts over the past few years, with sexual behaviour sometimes seeming as threatening to the Pentagon as Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The Navy was torn apart in 1991 by the Tailhook affair, when a gathering of naval aviators in Las Vegas got out of hand, spilling over into public sex and the harassment of women. The Army has had its problems, too, notably with accusations of assault and sexual harassment at the Aberdeen training ground in Maryland, and the scandals surrounding Sergeant Major Gene McKinney, the most senior enlisted man. The Air Force's first woman bomber pilot, Lieutenant Kelly Flynn, was dismissed from the service for fraternisation and committing adultery, and then lying about it. Just yesterday, five naval officers were accused of sexual misconduct and having improper relationships with female cadets at the Navy's only boot camp, the Great Lakes Naval Training Centre, north of Chicago.

Not all of this, by any means, can be laid at the door of sexual integration. The Tailhook affair would have happened whether



Lt Kelly Flynn: dismissed for adultery  
Photograph: Sygma

or not women were allowed into the military, and several of the scandals have concerned adulterous liaisons that went on outside the services. But the proliferation of problems and the headline grabbing stories of servicemen behaving badly have inevitably sparked a backlash.

This week, the House National Security Committee shot back. It voted for separate barracks and separate training for men and women, the first indication that the rumble of unhappiness might break out into a war. The kissing has to stop, the committee said: let the shooting start. 'All we're trying to do,' said Gen Taylor, a Mississippi Democrat, who is one of the key backers of the move, 'is get basic training back to basic training, not social experimentation.' Roscoe Bartlett, a Maryland Republican, tried to block mixed training last year but got nowhere; now his time may be coming, as support for the measure gathers steam. Mixing the military is something, he says, which 'in 5,000 years of recorded history, no successful military has done'.

The Spartans, of course, while maintaining an all-male military, were quite keen on having them get as closely acquainted as possible, on the basis that soldiers who had learnt to love each other would fight

together more effectively. But this is probably an argument that President Clinton won't want to get into, with memories of the damaging battles over homosexuality in the military and 'Don't ask, don't tell,' still fresh in the memory.

'Don't Talk, Don't touch,' is the new rubric. But that doesn't go far enough for opponents of integration, who want to roll back what they see as politically motivated meddling with the military. 'The purpose of basic training is not to advance a civilian feminist agenda, or to teach men and women to get along, but to impose a cultural shock that transforms young civilians... into uniformed members of the armed forces,' said Elaine Donnelly, the head of the Center for Military Readiness, a Michigan interest group that focuses on the presence of women and homosexuals in the military.

This is only the first skirmish, of course, and the legislation has a long way to go before it passes into law. The military themselves are adamantly opposed to the idea of re-segregating the services, arguing that it makes no sense and will weaken the fighting capability of the units concerned.

Officials at the Great Lakes Training Centre yesterday insisted that male and female recruits could be trained together at the same base. 'I think it's a very good thing because we currently have a fleet that is operating successfully today with men and women working together as a team,' said Rear Adm. Kevin Green, the Great Lakes commander.

There is a set of practical issues involved here, of course. For instance, a task force earlier this year pointed out that trying to target training at both men and women may make things too tough for some of the women, and not tough enough for some of the men. 'Men were not attaining their full potential because they were not being physically challenged enough, and women were suffering injuries at far greater rate than men,' says Ms Donnelly.

But the real problem, undoubtedly, in the minds of opponents of integration is sexual. 'Coed training and sleeping arrangements have led to rampant sexual indiscretions,' said Ms Donnelly.

In the end, it all boils down to that favourite old instruction of British Army Sergeants: hands off cocks, on with socks.



Divided: New moves will see male and female recruits separated at training camps

Photograph: FSP

## Hero's voyage ends in Hollywood

A survival story to end all survival stories has just come to light. David Usborne on a true war epic

COMING soon to a screen near you: a story of courage and endurance, a story of one man's escape from his Japanese captors in the Second World War, a story of a journey across 3,000 miles of open ocean in a leaky boat with no water and rations of coconut milk and shark flesh. A story of unbelievable human survival.

Unbelievable but, it seems, true. The star will doubtless be a Hollywood idol - Brad Pitt, perhaps, or Ralph Fiennes - but the hero portrayed will be an American aviator who really existed. He was Lieutenant Damon 'Rocky' Gause, a flier with the America's 27th Bombardment Group (Light).

Li Gause did not survive the war. In a final irony, he died in March 1944, not in action, but test-piloting a P47 bomber over the Isle of Wight.

For reasons never determined, he flew nose first into the ground. On the instructions of his father, Li Gause was not returned to the US, but buried alongside victims of both World Wars at the Cambridge American cemetery in Cambridge.

What is about to make 'Rocky' Gause one of the most famous heroes of the war years, however, all happened in the South China Sea two years earlier. Almost as remarkable as the story itself is the manner in which it has come to light today. Throughout his odyssey from the Philippines all the way to Australia, Li Gause scribbled notes, which he later rewrote as a seamless journal entitled 'By the Grace of God and the Filipino People'. Accompanying it are photographs taken with a box camera and eight rolls of film.



Close shave: Damon Gause gets a haircut after his remarkable escape to Australia  
Photograph: Sunlife News/Features

The journal and pictures remained intact in an Air Force footlocker shipped back to his widow and only son, Damon Jr, in Georgia in 1944. There it remained undisturbed for more than 50 years, until the widow, who is still living, gave her son permission to publicise its existence and contents.

It was in contacting a New York literary agent, Mary Tahan, that Mr Gause ensured his father's odyssey would finally be unveiled. The journal opens in December 1943 when Lt Gause arrives in Manila just before his fall to the Japanese. The incredible journey really begins in April 1942, however, when, after a knifing a prison guard, he escaped captivity and swam three miles to the island of Corregidor in Manila Bay. Corregidor, however, fell on 6 May and Gause was forced to flee once more.

Gause made it first back to Luzon, half by boat and half swimming, before washing up soon afterwards on the island of Mindoro to the south. There, in deep jungle, he met an American Army captain, William Osborne. Together, they resolved to make it all the

way to Australia in a dilapidated 22ft boat with a diesel engine that ran, but only sporadically.

What followed was a series

of incidents and visits to tiny islands along the way that makes even the story of *Papillon* seem pale. They raided a Japanese lighthouse for fuel for the engine and food, killing a Japanese sentry. Love and sex, other vital Hollywood ingredients, also feature. 'There is a love affair there,' confirmed Ms Tahan, that happened during the boat journey.

One stop was at a leper colony on the island of Bunganga, where an American marine engineer, suffering from the disease, helped them repair their sputtering engine. On another island, a woman missionary gave them shelter and provided Gause with the camera and rolls and film.

Finally, 159 days after first setting sail, Gause and Osborne washed up in Wyndham, Australia, 300 miles to the southwest of Darwin. Disbelieving Australian servicemen took them in.

'Rocky' Gause became, in fact, the first genuine American hero of the war, feted in front



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# Clinton risks Israel's anger to woo US Arabs

By Mary Dejevsky  
in Washington

AS President Clinton's special envoy to the Middle East arrived in Israel to prod prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu into meeting Monday's deadline, Mr Clinton was ratcheting up the pressure from Washington.

After the inconclusive London talks earlier in the week, the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, had threatened that if Mr Netanyahu would not cede land to the Palestinians, Washington could re-examine its whole Middle East policy. In appeals and veiled threats, Mr Clinton has reinforced the message that if there is no agreement, the future of the Oslo accords is question.

Over 48 hours, Mr Clinton illustrated what that could mean. On Thursday night he became the first serving President to address a gathering of Arab-Americans. To an ecstatic welcome, Mr Clinton told a dinner attended by more than 750 members of the US Arab community what was at stake.

"In almost every area of human endeavour, opportunities do not last forever," he said. "They must be seized, and I

hope this one will be... we have got to get this done." Mr Clinton's words were clearly addressed more to Israelis than Palestinians, as the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has already accepted the terms for Monday's proposed meeting in Washington.

Earlier that day it became known Hillary Clinton had spoken with approval of Palestinian statehood. She told a US-sponsored youth camp in Switzerland by satellite that "it will be in the long-term interests of the Middle East to finish the whole thing by this month next year," he said.

A flurry of qualifications followed: it was her "personal view", her spokeswoman, Marsha Berry, said, "and US policy is unchanged". She was not reflecting any administration policy, said the White House spokesman, Mike McCurry. He denied it was "part of a calculated strategy".

But Mrs Clinton is no novice in foreign affairs (she has acted as unofficial presidential envoy on numerous occasions) and yields little to her husband in political acumen. And few were deceived. While Jewish American groups condemned her remarks, the President of the Arab-American Institute

in Washington, James Zogby, congratulated her on "helping to break the taboo".

Mr Clinton, for his part, used each and every public appearance to chivvy Mr Netanyahu into making the concession on land that would make the planned talks in Washington on Monday worthwhile. He denied Israel was facing an ultimatum: "What we are trying to do is to get the parties over a hurdle so... we can stay on the timetable established a few years ago by both the Palestinians and the Israelis to finish the whole thing by this month next year," he said.

Responding to cries of foul from sections of Congress, where the Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives had accused Mr Clinton of siding with the Palestinians and "bullying" Israel, he said: "There is no way in the world I could impose an agreement on them or dictate their security to them". If Mr Clinton had to tread warily with Congress, he had hardly had to apologize to the Jewish lobby outside Congress. Divided about Mr Netanyahu's policy, American Jews were largely silent, and some Jewish leaders said that they continued to support US policy.

THE procession in memory of the Pakistani bishop who killed himself in protest at the sentencing to death of a fellow Catholic turned violent yesterday when police fired into a crowd of furious mourners, wounding several.

John Joseph, Bishop of Faisalabad, 150 miles from the capital, Islamabad, shot himself

on Thursday in the court building where Ayub Massih was condemned to death last month for allegedly praising Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*. The bishop was a long-standing, vociferous opponent of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, passed in the early Nineties under the former leader General Zia and which stipulate the death sentence

for those defiling the name of the Prophet Muhammad. They have been criticised by human rights groups as being vaguely worded and thus liable to be used to intimidate the country's small non-Muslim minority.

The clashes yesterday started after 2,000 mourners formed a procession to take the coffin to the cathedral in Faisalabad, where the funeral is to be held tomorrow. Many were chanting slogans against Zia and the religious law.

Police and mourners traded accusations over who initiated the clash. The city's police chief said his men came under attack first from a hail of stones, while the mourners said the stone-throwing started on the police side. As the police fired over and into the crowd, several mourners were hit, including a young girl shot in the stomach. The rest of the crowd fled into

the cathedral, which the police surrounded.

The clashes and the bishop's gesture of self-sacrifice are unlikely to achieve their object of forcing Pakistan to repeal its religious laws.

They are intended only to protest Islam and not oppress other faiths - according to the government.

The US yesterday repeated its call for the government to drop the case against Ayub Massih and repeal the laws.

Christians form a small, impotent community in Pakistan. Many are descendants of the poorest sections of the community who accepted the faith of European missionaries in the 18th and 19th centuries and are thus open to the charge of accepting the religion of the colonial oppressor.

The object of the bishop's gesture of self-sacrifice is in jail pending an appeal, his family a target for Islamic militants. Bashirah Bibi, his mother, said her entire family had had to leave their village.



The body of John Joseph, Bishop of Faisalabad, who shot himself over the death sentence on a fellow Catholic who allegedly praised Salman Rushdie

## Riots at suicide bishop's memorial

Marcus Tanner on the violent feelings aroused by the self-sacrifice of a cleric who fought religious persecution

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## Fresh sanctions against Belgrade as crisis deepens

By Rupert Cornwell

THE escalating crisis in Kosovo was poised to dominate the discussions among the world's major powers in London which began last night, as Yugoslavia rejected international mediation in the crisis, and further sanctions were set to start against the Belgrade regime.

The formal setting was a meeting of foreign ministers ahead of next weekend's annual G8 summit, to be held in Birmingham. But the six G8 countries which make up the Contact Group - Italy, France, Germany, Britain, Russia and the United States - are convening separately to decide what further pressure to exert on President Slobodan Milosevic.

As matters stand, earlier sanctions - which include a freeze of Yugoslav foreign assets and a suspension of International Monetary Fund credits - are due to be joined today by a ban on foreign investment in Serbia, a step which the West believes could hit hard at Mr Milosevic's efforts to revive the struggling economy.

Yesterday, Belgrade for-

mally turned down a mission by the Contact Group's appointed mediator, the former Spanish prime minister Felipe Gonzalez, and the new curbs seem inevitable. Russia however will again not take part and Mr Milosevic, diplomats acknowledge, is likely to remain intransigent for a while yet. "We're going into this with our eyes open," a British diplomat said this week.

Other topics for the G8 include the Middle East, where Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State, will be presenting a bleak assessment of progress in the Israeli-Palestinian talks and the delicate negotiations over the shape of the permanent international criminal court under United Nations auspices, which should be set up this summer.

Nigeria will also be on the agenda. Ministers will condemn the continuing failure of the military government in Africa's largest country to restore democracy. But they will probably also examine further sanctions, including action against Nigeria's oil exports. No final decision however, is expected.

## Pope to beatify Croatian archbishop

IN A controversial gesture, the Pope will beatify a Croatian archbishop seen as a hero to Croats but who is a hate-figure in neighbouring Serbia, writes Marcus Tanner.

Aljozije Stepinac, archbishop of Zagreb during Yugoslavia's darkest hours in the Second World War, was tried after the victory of Josip Tito's Communist partisans for supporting the Nazi-backed independent Croatian state. Under that regime, led

by the dictator Ante Pavelic, Serbs, Jews and gypsies were persecuted and tens of thousands - if not more - killed in pogroms and camps.

Most Croats thought Stepinac's trial in 1946 was a show trial and that his real crime was not collaboration with fascists but outspoken anti-Communism. Before his death, under house arrest in 1960, he had become a virtual saint in the eyes of Croatia's Catholic majority.



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## More openness, please, Mr Cook

THE LETTER that Sandline International's lawyers sent to the Foreign Secretary a fortnight ago, and now in the public domain, seems to suggest that the official contacts with this firm of "military consultants" were much more extensive than was previously thought. Tony Lloyd, the Foreign Office minister, has "points to correct" in his evidence to MPs about the Government's role. All this raises once again the way that ministers have handled the Sierra Leone issue. Naturally any firm judgement on the behaviour of ministers and officials must await the various inquiries now under way. But we can at this stage say that even if those involved were complicit, they need not feel that they are defenceless.

Politically complex, the moral questions posed by events in Sierra Leone are straightforward: the democratically-elected government was ousted by a military dictator, and Britain appears to have covertly assisted the legitimate government in returning to power. The problem was the wording of a United Nations resolution imposing sanctions on the African country as an expression of the world's disapproval. The effect was to prevent aid going to the ousted President, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

If Britain is to run an ethical foreign policy, it should include helping restore legitimate democratic rulers where possible. But preferably without subterfuge. Mr Cook should in future try to ensure that the UN's knee-jerk reaction – an arms embargo – is tempered by the need for flexibility when dealing with genocidal, illegal regimes. He should also try more openness in his approach.

## Time for change in local voting

FEWER PEOPLE turned out to vote in Thursday's local elections than in any comparable democratic contest in modern times. Obviously this is not a "good thing". But a closer examination of the evidence suggests that democracy is not quite approaching the collapse some would have us believe.

One powerful explanation for the low rate of participation lies in the "nationalisation" of local elections. In recent decades they have become an excellent vehicle for the disgruntled voter to punish an unpopular government. Politicians can't easily rubbish them as they do the opinion polls or by-elections. Unsuccessful leaders have to answer to armies of walking wounded ex-councillors. The trend became more pronounced over this decade, starting with the protest over the poll tax in 1990 which contributed to the downfall of Margaret Thatcher. Then local elections became referendums on the personal fate of John Major. Many perfectly blameless Tory councillors saw their careers end this way.

Most of the nation, however, got its protesting out of its system with the election of Tony Blair's government. Happily for him the local elections came after a fortnight of coverage about his unprecedented popularity. People registered their content with the state of national politics by simply staying at home. This is not inevitable. We can be sure that if Mr Blair had announced an Abolition of the World Cup (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill on the morning of 7 May then things might have been different.

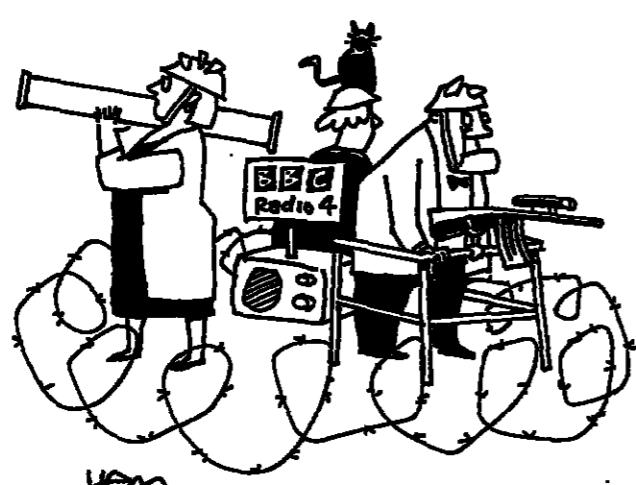
So this year, in the absence of a protest vote, and with the content majority abstaining, those who did actually bother to turn out did so for the right – local – reasons. The diverse pattern of results suggests, as Professor Anthony King observed, that these were the most "local" of local elections. Labour, for example, found itself struggling in Hackney, where it has been embroiled in a rather distasteful scandal, but making surprising progress in Harrow. The Liberal Democrats could take the leader of Sheffield Council's seat on the same night as their deputy leader on the Isle of Wight took a nasty tumble. The Conservatives were able to make up ground in Battersea while they lost Bromley.

This proves that it is possible for local contests to be fought on local issues. Nevertheless, turnout figures this low cannot be good for the long-term health of our democracy. The proposed reforms of local democracy and introduction of directly elected mayors will help re-invigorate local democracy. Mr Blair should speed up his reforms. He may not have much time before the protest voters return to boost the turnout figures for all the wrong reasons.

## Safe new Radio 4

"SOLE LUNDY, Fastnet, Irish Sea..." As listeners, viewers and readers, we are conservative creatures. But the Radio 4 audience is the most conservative of all. They represent a sort of National Trust of the airwaves, devoted to the preservation of the fabric of broadcasting schedules. Accidental survivals from an earlier age are treated with reverence. The shipwreck forecasts, the six o'clock bongs, the seagulls on Roy Plomley's desert island. Millions of domestic routines have been displaced by the shifting of *The Archers*. Millions of ears have been offended by "30 minutes of news and comment from the BBC" instead of the 40 of *The World At One*.

And yet... the surprising thing about the changes brought in by James Boyle, controller of Radio 4, is how little protest there has been. Now, a



month on from the small earthquake we can add: not many hurt. This is an extraordinary achievement for Mr Boyle. Remember how the BBC was forced to back down by the Save Radio 4 Long Wave campaign in 1993? Mr Boyle does. And he prepared the ground for his frankly modest renovations of the national monument with care, pre-empting the fuss, taking the Radio 4 Roadshow to middle England and squaring the Speaker of the House of Commons over the changes to parliamentary coverage.

So what of the reforms? Some of them are good, some not so good. John Peel's programme about families on Saturday morning, for example, is excellent, but starting the news just before 9am instead of on the hour is highly irritating. Letters to the BBC's own *Feedback* are running strongly against the changes but, as ever, the contented tend not to write in. What is significant is that middle England has not marched on Broadcasting House to protest. They are sleeping safely in their beds, soothed by familiar litannies. "Rockall, Malin, Hebrides..."



"Baggy-trousered urban surfers disporting themselves on concrete shores" – the best way to un-grey Britain? (see letter below right)

Photograph: Rex Features

### Middle East's tragedy

Sir: If ever a single picture epitomised the tragedy of the Middle East, Paul Hackett's portrait of Yasser Arafat (6 May) surely does.

Mr Arafat has been a tireless campaigner on behalf of his people all his life. The futility of armed struggle against the USA's premier client state in the Middle East has been repeatedly brought home to the Palestinian community, and in Oslo the diplomatic option seemed to have paid off.

The murder of Yitzhak Rabin, the only Israeli statesman to have the courage to grasp the nettle of peace with honour, and Benjamin Netanyahu's subsequent arrogant denial of both the letter and spirit of the 1993 Oslo accords, point to one crushing, salient fact: Israel, supported by the US, can ignore the "peace process" with impunity, and is free to pursue its own agenda of accelerated settlement, the economic isolation of Palestinian territory and the acquisition of state-of-the-art military technology with which to browbeat its neighbours. If ever there was a man caught between a rock and a hard place, it is Mr Arafat.

It is high time that the likes of Robin Cook and Madeleine Albright stopped pandering to Mr Netanyahu and dismissed the "peace process" as the distortion it is while the Zionists relentlessly pursue their morbid dreams. The state of Israel has been an unmitigated and unholy disaster for the entire Middle East since its inception 50 years ago, and as protagonists in the whole débâcle we British should assure our responsibilities and take the centre of the stage.

It is time to start the healing process. Accept the fact that the Palestinians have been dispossessed of their homeland. Acknowledge the fact that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians languish in squalid refugee camps whilst Uzi-toting settlers build homes on appropriated lands.

Sadly we cannot turn back the clock and avert the Holocaust, but we must start looking for solutions in Palestine that do not simply legitimise Zionist aggrandisement and trample legitimate Palestinian aspirations. Yasser Arafat is an old, frail and unloved man in the world today, and we owe his people something to make him smile.

STEVE RAZZETTI  
Hesket Newmarket, Cumbria

### Why I didn't vote

Sir: My choice not to vote in the London referendum had nothing whatever to do with either apathy or complacency, but was based on the fact that, whichever answer I gave, it would convey a meaning I did not intend.

I firmly believe that London needs an overall strategy and that the present system is failing the citizens miserably. On this basis you might say I should have voted "Yes".

But I could get no satisfactory answers to questions about the proposed Mayor's accountability. The Government's documentation is deliberately vague. The White Paper summary states: "The Assembly would question the Mayor on his or her activities [and] would agree or suggest changes to the Mayor's plans". But what will happen if they don't agree or endorse the Mayor's plans? Will the Assembly be so powerless that they are just the Mayor's puppets?

The Mayor is likely to be elected on personality and charisma rather than on party political lines.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: [letters@independent.co.uk](mailto:letters@independent.co.uk). E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

whereas in the present political climate the Assembly will probably incline towards New Labour. If the Mayor's ideas do not reflect those of the Assembly there is potential for conflict and even stalemate.

Most people who voted "No" did so because they would end up paying out more money for bureaucracy. If I had voted "No", this would have been interpreted as meaning either that I don't want to contribute towards improving London, or that I am satisfied with the way things are now – both of which are untrue.

SUSAN ESTERMANN  
London NW6

Sir: Low turnout in local elections will be blamed on the polling stations being in the wrong place. It would apparently be better if they were all in supermarkets.

It couldn't be that all the main parties looked identical in most parts of the country and so there wasn't much of a choice for voters?

It couldn't be that most powers have been removed from local government and so there isn't much to vote for?

And it couldn't be that the spin-doctors want fewer elections, just for the occasional Mayor (and Prime Minister?) who can be trusted to do everything for us?

A one-stop shop indeed.  
JOHN NICHOLSON  
Manchester

### Act now to avert famine

Sir: As an agency that has worked in Sudan for over 20 years, CAFOD was deeply concerned at some of the assertions made in the article "Is there really a famine in Sudan?" (7 May).

It's all too easy to sit in London and play the numbers game, debating where a humanitarian crisis ends and a famine begins. In the meantime people are put at ever-greater risk of dying as each day passes without sufficient aid getting through to them.

We reject the claim that "famine fatigue" might set in if the crisis is highlighted before it becomes a full-blown tragedy. As CAFOD has seen from the early response to our appeal, the British public is more interested in prevention and is willing to contribute to a programme that can avert disaster.

The next few weeks are crucial for the people of Sudan. After that the rains will begin and it will be very difficult to reach the people at greatest risk of starvation. However, if we can get enough food through now,

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it may be possible to sustain people until the August harvest.

Because we work with the local church structures we do not need to set up feeding centres or relief shelters, because we can reach the people in their villages. Therefore our relief work is not encouraging people to leave their homes to get food.

CAFOD has received an urgent appeal from our church partners in Sudan, who have told us that people now face starvation. As a direct response we have appealed to our supporters for £1m. We believe that the public would prefer to respond now rather than wait until later in the year when there may be more deaths.

PAT JONES  
Deputy Director, CAFOD  
London SW9

### Nappies: a plastic peril?

Sir: Vanya Body (letter, 2 May) is to be commended even for considering using "real" nappies rather than disposables, and if she asks women old enough actually to have used things she may get a more positive response than from her contemporaries.

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PAT JONES  
Deputy Director, CAFOD  
London SW9

### Just say yes

Sir: Both Tim Beach (letter, 2 May) and Derek Stapley (letter, 8 May) miss the mark. The fact of predilection (or its being part of God's creation) is irrelevant to the justification of a sexual act. The only thing that should count is consent.

MICHAEL BRYANT  
Carnforth, Lancashire

### QUOTE UNQUOTE

"I was taught by a boss 20 years ago that if you are going to preach madness, better show up in a conservative suit." — Tom Peters, American management guru

"I always say that if there is something detrimental, derogatory or otherwise ghastly to do, I will be the person made to do it." — Ulrika Jonsson, TV personality

"Most guys think women in the military aren't attractive. I wanted to show my feminine side." — Lieutenant Frederica Spelman, of the US Navy who was reprimanded for posing topless in *Playboy*.

"I like a bit of rough, a bit of crumpled at the edges in men." — Jackie Ballard, Liberal Democrat MP

"It's funny these people like Ben Elton suddenly criticise New Labour. I think it is the first-ever recorded case of rats leaving a floating ship." — Alexei Sayle, comedian

"Not for a second does it occur to these poor boobs that the democratic right to vote includes the democratic right to not vote on the grounds that they are a confederation of dullards and busybodies hellbent on stopping people doing things." — Keith Waterhouse, on being pestered to vote.

### Let the skateboarders rip

Sir: Having recently returned from a term's sabbatical leave in Australia, and still reeling from climate- and culture-shock, I felt consoled and encouraged to see, on Sunday afternoon, a battalion of young skateboarders exercising their risky art on the steps and slopes of Cambridge University's Sidgwick Avenue site. Except for a few ghostly academics, this area is effectively depopulated at the weekend. It is, to all intents and purposes, an empty space, almost ideally designed for the pursuit of skateboarding. Needless to add, it is also plastered with signs saying, "No Skateboarding".

Quite rightly, no one was taking a blind bit of notice of this bureaucratic nonsense. For a moment, I was led to think that grey old England was at last starting to come alive. My seven-year-old son remarked, "This place is fun", something which has not often been said of the home of the Classics, History, and Modern and Medieval Languages Faculties. We were both wrong. It was not long before some censorious professor called time on all the excitement and one of the university's official sports (garbed in a fluorescent raincoat) arrived to shoo everyone away and restore the faculties to their state of funereal Sunday calm.

This was a miniature tragedy. The University is missing a golden opportunity here to bridge the old town/gown barrier. We are wasting a space whose architecture can only be redeemed by having baggy-trousered urban surfers disporting themselves on its concrete shores. And, at no cost, we could be increasing the cheerfulness of the nation. But no – we would rather stamp it out.

In a spirit of renewal, let us take down those prohibitive signs and let the skateboarders rip. And where the University leads, a few other tired institutions – the British Museum, the National Theatre, for example – might follow. This could be the beginning of the un-greying of Britain.

DR ANDY MARTIN

Lecturer in French

University of Cambridge

### A better life for animals

Sir: After the RSPCA week in which we have been reminded of the incredible cruelty to some animals, may I suggest a way forward?

We have instruction and a test when we want to drive a car; we have some rudimentary classes when children are brought into the world – but most people who take on an animal have no idea how to care for it or train it.

I would like to see the reintroduction of a licence like the dog licence, but one covering all animals, and a mandatory course of training with each new animal. If owners are cruel to the animal a court could withdraw the licence and take the animal into care for rehoming. The price of the licence should be at least £50 for the life of that animal.

GRAHAM HOWES

London N19

JENNIFER MILLER

London SW15



## It's no joke being a cartoonist

Martin Plimmer on a special festival devoted to the art world's mavericks

IN AT LEAST one respect, the cartoonist is God. He can make people's noses as big as he fancies. In every other way he is not so elevated.

There can be few people with lower status than him – it is nearly always a him. Unless the cartoonist is fortunate enough to be one of a tiny élite contracted to work for a national newspaper, he exists on the bottom rung of the media earnings ladder.

Newspapers don't devote so much space to cartoons any more and are less interested in the quality of the gag. The cartoonists sit at home all day staring at the wall, alternately barking with laughter and howling with despair, working up topical jokes, which he faxes in batches to newspapers in the hope that, should a hole happen to arise in an editorial layout, one of his cartoons will be picked from a huge pile of similar, unsolicited submissions.

Then his masterpiece will be shrunk to fit a tiny space, and he will receive from £40 to slightly over £100. The highest rates are paid by *Private Eye* and *Punch*, for whom the cartoon is much more than a filler. *Punch* uses 20 to 30 cartoons a week which threaten to sink cartoon editor Steve Way's desk. He gets 700 a week, but the number keeps on growing. "It's one of those things a lot of people think they can do and while it's relatively easy to make some money, it's very difficult to make a career of it. You've got to sell four or five to make a reasonable weekly wage and to achieve that you've got

to do 30 or 40 drawings. You've got to be a very good cartoonist to earn more than £6,000 a year. It's that hard."

We don't value our cartoonists – we don't even have a cartoon museum. But it also has a lot to do with the cartoonist's habit of looking sideways at people and laughing quietly to himself. He is the dysfunctional brother of the stand-up comedian (whose ability to repeat his jokes he envies).

This cloak of anonymity will be cast aside tomorrow at Cartoon '98, a celebration of cartoonists' art at Chelsea Town Hall, London. Those being touted include Michael Heath, Caroline Holden, Chris Riddell, Geoff Thompson, Giles Pilbrow and Colin Wheeler.



The joker: fantasy and the reality  
Cartoons: B Kilbain

"It's an attempt to raise the status of cartoons," says Duncan McCoshan whose home-made magazine, *The Journal of Silly*, is organising the day together with the Cartoon Arts Trust. There will be stalls selling original drawings, displays by caricaturists and children's workshops. The illustration on the poster for the event is of a man shooting his shadow with a gun. That won't put anyone off. As every cartoonist knows, angst is funny.



Scenes from a torture chamber: Carl's hands are cut off (left) because of his love for a man; Tinker forcibly injects a hysterical Grace, while Robin looks on (below). Photograph: Robbie Jack

## Real live horror show

Sarah Kane's new play, 'Cleansed', will shock theatre-goers, but that doesn't mean it shouldn't be shown. By David Benedict

FOR BETTER or worse, the spell of most plays drifts off the moment you leave the theatre. Not Sarah Kane's *Cleansed. Hard as you try, its compelling, horror-soaked atmosphere refuses to be shaken off. It clings to you like a shroud.*

This is hardly surprising in a play which painstakingly charts the descent into the brutality of a world which seeks to deny the power of positive emotion. Its catalogue of cruelties has already been accused of being irresponsibly shocking but the real shock is how powerfully the vivid images resound in your imagination for ages afterwards.

The hullabaloo that greeted Kane's Royal Court debut, *Blasted*, in 1995, catapulted her from nowhere to notoriety in a single night. Broadcast newspapers, and tabloids who didn't even have a theatre critic, cleared pages to denounce the "atrocities" on display. Theatre hadn't seen such scandal since Mary Whitehouse tried to sue the National for the simulated rape in *The Romans in Britain* 15 years earlier, a scene which resembled *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* in comparison.

Kane's return to the Court revisits extreme violence. Grace (Suzan Sylvester) visits a nameless institution to reclaim the clothes of her beloved brother Graham, who died while being held there as a heroin addict. Although we have already seen his death in the opening scene – he's given a fatal overdose via an injection in his eye – there is an air of malevolent mystery about what is happening.

But Kane refuses to spoon-feed her audience with anything as comforting as a straightforward detective narrative. Instead she presents us with 20 measured scenes set within this fascist institution designed to rid society of its "undesirables", in which torture and punishment are mercilessly and methodically meted out to a desperate

group of people struggling to save themselves through love.

At one particularly tender moment, Grace tries to teach Robin, an educationally subnormal boy, to read and write. Trying to draw her name so that the image corresponds to the sound of the word, he asks her for a pink crayon. Grace insists: "It's not about colour, colour doesn't come into it." To a degree, that sums up Kane's world view. For her, nearly everything is black and white, with few shades of grey. Learning that she was a fervent, born-again Christian until the age of 17 comes as no surprise when faced with the complete conviction of her writing: that there is no room for doubt.

The writing has an almost unparalleled distilled intensity which is often unbearable to watch. Whether flinching or

much contemporary dialogue-driven young writing look limply unambitious.

She is also an extremely strict writer. As in the work of Edward Bond (a major influence), her stage directions demand the apparently impossible, from the severing of limbs to burning a library of books to shattering a wall with blood and gunfire. As her own production of her translation of *Phaedra's Love* proved (an event which forced many of her critics to recant), she is no mean director herself.

But here, as in *Blasted*, she has the inimitable good fortune to have a director with a similarly exacting dramatic mind. James Macdonald's production has a quite terrifying sense of purpose.

It is impossible to say where Jeremy Herbert's design stops and Macdonald's direction takes

tancing degree of stylisation. The pain would be unbearable. Yet the night I saw it, nobody left.

The precision of the staging may be beautiful but even that can not disguise clear weaknesses in the writing. With his shaved head looking lost and vulnerable nodding over his gangly body, Daniel Evans is a vision of innocence as Robin. The scene where he discovers an abacus and carefully counts out his days, building to his desperately sad suicide, is an extraordinarily affecting portrayal of a boy lost in hope, but several of the other roles are fatally underwritten. Stuart McQuarrie tries to lend depth to the torturer but the role leaves him straitjacketed.

The spare dialogue strives to

to the bone but Kane's rigour overtakes her. The moments of pure goodness – the warmth of sunlight or the sudden appearance of upon row upon row of daffodils – are there to counterbalance the horrors of a society which kills love, but they don't resonate as strongly as she wills them to. There are flashes of humour (which the audience feasts upon like manna in the wilderness) but they are few and far between, and too often she tips the balance too far, which leaves her straining to achieve further effect.

*Cleansed* is no means an unmitigated success, but the duty of all new-writing theatres is to honour the vision of its playwrights. To reach maturity, as Kane surely will, it is essential that their work be staged. An unperformed text remains unfinished. This fiercely powerful realisation of a profoundly dystopian vision is one of the most disturbing productions you will ever see. To some it will be repellent. Others will recognise it as absolute proof of the power of live theatre.

*Cleansed* is at the Royal Court Theatre downstairs, London WC2 (0171 565 5000).



SHOCK! OUTRAGE! ENCORE!

"Shock and horror tactics in the theatre have an honourable tradition from the Greeks and Jacobean through to James Bond. Kane may want to be a Bad Girl, but she also shows enormous promise."

Michael Coveney,  
Daily Mail

"Sarah Kane clearly believes that she is a serious writer with important things to say. What saddens me is that the Royal Court encourages her in this delusion, in what looks like

a cynical attempt to retain its reputation for controversial cutting-edge theatre. In fact, the play is a deadly, entirely predictable bore."

Charles Spencer,  
Daily Telegraph

"She is not the gloating opportunist that some reviewers of *Blasted* thought; she has, I feel, no less integrity than Pinter or Bond; but, God knows, I would hate to live in her head."

Benedict Nightingale,  
The Times

It used to be penniless students.  
Now it's skint parents."

THE LEARNING CURVE: Libby Purves describes the best university courses, campuses and value for money.

Tuesday afternoon, 12 May 4.02 – 4.30.

BBC RADIO 4  
92-95 FM & 198 LW

YOU'LL SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY.

## ROBERT HANKS' WEEK IN RADIO

THERE are more things in heaven and earth, correct me if I'm wrong, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. In an edition of the science programme

*Frontiers*, entitled "Some of Our Universe Is Missing" (Radio 4, Wednesday), the tag turned out to have a gratifyingly literal application.

Peter Evans talked to a number of scientists about "dark matter", the really heavy, black stuff which, according to the best calculations, is floating around, invisibly, somewhere in the universe.

The argument goes like this: it seems clear that there must be an awful lot of gravity holding the whirling cosmos together. And since gravity goes along with mass, we can have a pretty good stab at the mass of the universe. But when we compare that calculation with the amount of stuff we can see, it seems that we can only account for about 10 per cent of that mass. So there must be vast quantities of invisible stuff to make up the difference.

This opening section was presented with admirable clarity; after that, though, despite his best efforts and those of the

scientists interviewed, clarity broke down somewhat. This is not an area in which clarity is entirely possible.

The fascinating part of the programme came at the end, where scientists suggested alternatives to dark matter: perhaps we're wrong to assume that space is a simple, empty thing, and the effects we attribute to dark matter are just space doing what it does. Or perhaps we need to scrap all our physics and begin again from first principles.

Most scientists, understandably, were unhappy with this idea, but one or two were tickled. That line about more things on heaven and earth is a cliché beloved of the *X-Files* fan, but really, it is science's own motto – an acknowledgement that it doesn't know all the answers and shouldn't claim to.

In the same week, however, we have had a depressing example of the thoroughly unscientific, in the shape of *Sleuths* (Radio 4, Tuesday). This series ended with a look at Keith Wright, a detective with the Metropolitan Police who moonlights as a clairvoyant. Wright, himself, had no time for

scientific justifications, he just "knew" that his psychic powers worked, and backed his knowledge up with some vague anecdotal evidence.

More worrying, though, was the thoroughly uncritical tone

of the programme, taking all his claims at face value and giving him airtime to counter every attack. What is the point of broadcasting science programmes when you undermine them with superstitious tosh?

## Bonnard at the Tate

'Captivating' Times  
'Wonderful' Financial Times  
'Magical' Time Out  
'Magnificent' Mail on Sunday  
'Splendid and unmissable' Spectator  
'A show to revisit and revisit' Sunday Telegraph

Last weeks – ends 17 May 1998

Tickets on the door or in advance from First Call: 0171-420 0055 (booking fee)

Exhibition sponsored by ERNST & YOUNG

Tate Gallery

Ssshhh!  
This is strictly off the record."

WESTMINSTER HOUR: At the end of the programme, Simon Hoggart shares the secrets of Westminster with the rest of Britain in "It's a Funny Old World" Sunday evenings from 10 May 10.45 – 11.00.

BBC RADIO 4  
92-95 FM & 198 LW  
YOU'LL SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY.





## Second-line rail companies could be next bid target

### MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

**TWO** of the stock market's second-line rail companies are looking increasingly vulnerable to takeover strikes.

GB Railways, running the Anglia franchise, is seen as a target for FirstGroup; Prism Rail, which started with the London Tilbury and Southend services, is another possible FirstGroup target, although some wonder whether it, too, has its sights on GB.

Shares of GB steamed ahead 25p to a 231.5p peak, capitalising the company at £19m. The much bigger Prism gained 7.5p to 402.5p.

FirstGroup, with bus and train interests, was little changed at 406p. Stagecoach improved 15p to 1,205p and National Express 6.5p to 993.5p.

Small, unquoted transport companies have in recent months found themselves on the receiving end of generous bids. GB and Prism, both traded on the junior AIM market, could be the next to fall.

The stock market enjoyed the May sunshine. Once again supporting shares made the running with Footsie, after some hesitation, scoring a 31.8 points gain to 5,969.8. Around lunchtime it was down 39.5 but a strong New York display, on the back of jobs figures, helped sentiment.

But supporting shares captured the glory. The mid cap and small cap indices stretched to new peaks; the mid cap jumping 38.4 to 5,741.1 and the small cap 18.7 at 3,704.6.

More takeover action on the under card prompted gains. Three companies said they were in bid talks. Concentric, an engineer, put on 38p to 145.5p; Gibson, a maker of printing inks, achieved a 48p gain to 213.5p and SDX Business Systems jumped 58p to 353.5p. But Trust Motor reversed 31p to 165p after bid talks broke down.

Nycomed non-voters, probably the most volatile Footsie share, led blue chips with a 159p surge to 2,009p. Reuters, BTR and Unilever were among other Footsie front runners.

Super stores drifted. Asda lost 5p to 189p and Tesco 8p to 560p. Safeway, due to report next week, recovered a 12p to close up 3p to 368p.

The chain's year's figures will be poor. It has already warned that trading is tough and many believe it is only the possibility of an Asda bid which has prevented the shares bumping along at around 300p. The year's results are expected to be around £375m, down from £430m.

Insurers Commercial Union and General Accident, merging to form CGU, will report for the last time as separate companies next week. Their combined first-quarter profits are likely to be less than half what the two made

in the same period last year. CU ended 12p higher at 1,140p and GenAcc shaded 2p to 1,528p.

EMI dipped 2p to 573p as doubts about a bid continued to weigh on the shares. After hours, it said talks had been terminated. BOC, figures next week, fell 33.5p to 976.5p as Dresdner Kleinwort Benson lowered its recommendation

for the chemical group from bold to sell.

Christie's International, the auctioneer, hardened 21.5p to 317p. Stories that the Bahamas-based tycoon Joseph Lewis collected 400p a share for the 29 per cent stake he sold to French investor Francois Pinault are causing a stir. Because the share deal was concluded outside the market there appears to be no need for either party to disclose the price, leaving the way clear for rumours to circulate and possibly create a false market.

If Mr Pinault did pay as much as 400p he would have to offer the same price to other shareholders, should he mount a takeover bid. There is increasing speculation that he is not the passive investor some suggested when he swooped.

Capita, the business support group, strengthened 28.5p to 574.5p on investment meetings and Verity put on 2p to 103.5p following more

licences for its NXT wafer-thin sound technology.

Digital television presentations lifted Carlton Communications 9.5p to 517p and Granada 4p to 1,087p. Pace Micro, a box-top maker, jumped 7.5p to 82.5p.

Geo Interactive Media firms 2.5p to 164p after revealing it hoped to place 18 million shares, raising at least £19m as part of a move from AIM to full listing. The placing will be between 125p and 150p a share.

Cantab Pharmaceuticals was the day's drugs winner, jumping 61.5p to 687.5p. Behind the surge was a claim that its gene technology had proved successful at transporting cancer-killing protein.

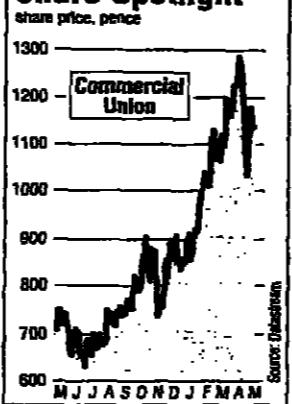
NFC, the old National Freight, motored 11p to 187.5p. A share buyback is due to start soon and Robert Fleming Securities rates the shares, forecasting profits will climb from a depressed £67m to £125m this year.

### TAKING STOCK

THE Ambush Pub Co, with just 31 outlets, enjoyed a rare old ferment. First dealings saw the shares surge from a 100p introduction to 325p; they settled at 265p. The obscure company has all the ingredients to make an impact. Its backers include David Bruce, creator of the Finkin pub concept, Michael Cannon (JA Devenish) and The Magic Pub Co) and entrepreneur Luke Johnson (PizzaExpress). Chairman is Philip Snook who used to be managing director of The Magic Pub Co. Managing director Colin Stevens signalled expansion. The company had already been contacted by companies interested in being acquired.

BURSE, a construction group, gained 3.5p to 22.5p on takeover speculation. After a wounding loss-making run, it has made profits in the past two years. At the interim stage profits of £2,086,000 were ahead of last year's total. Some expect £5m for the year just ended.

### Share Spotlight



### Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, including extraordinary items but excluding dividends.

Other details: Ex Rights & Dividends; Earnings & Dividends; P/E Ratio; Pd Party Paid; Pd Nt Paid; AIM; Gilt Prices are Bloomberg Generic.

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**JEREMY  
WARNER**  
ON HOW WIM  
DUISENBERG  
MIGHT OPERATE  
AT THE  
EUROPEAN  
CENTRAL BANK

## Whatever happened to gentlemanly behaviour?

THE THING about gentlemen's agreements is that no one, apart from those who agree them, is meant to know of their existence. It works like this. You and I agree on a course of action which neither of us likes very much, but we think a reasonable compromise in the circumstances. Since subjecting it to public scrutiny would involve one or both of us in loss of face, and the credibility of what we are doing would as a consequence be undermined, we have to trust each other to carry it out without formal contract. It's our little secret, just between you and me.

The fiasco of a deal that was hammered out in Brussels last weekend over the presidency of the European Central Bank, under which Wim Duisenberg "voluntarily" cuts short his term and makes way after four years for Jean-Claude Trichet, was meant to be a gentleman's agreement too. Unfortunately it fell a long way short of the model.

First, the manner in which it was born was the very reverse of gentlemanly behaviour. It was hard-fought brinkmanship right to the end, and it is impossible to avoid the conclusion it wouldn't have happened at all but for the fact that the very future of the euro was threatened.

Second, having apparently agreed it with all parties, Tony Blair then announced it to an incredulous world, thus breaking one

of the cardinal rules of the gentleman's agreement – that it shouldn't be made public. This was because the French insisted it be made public, so there could be no question of being reneged on, and so that everyone would know La France had scored a victory. Plainly Jacques Chirac does not believe either in modesty or gentlemanly behaviour.

Later Mr Blair tried to gloss over the reality even further by saying that long ago Mr Duisenberg had made it clear he would not serve the full eight years in view of his age, which is 62. So he was always going to go early and there's nothing new about that. But though Mr Blair might like to believe nothing of significance has happened, the rest of us know differently.

Third, Mr Duisenberg then denied there had been an agreement as such, describing the notion of the plan outlined by Mr Blair as "absurd", and saying it was not impossible he would stay longer than four years. So much for gentlemanly behaviour.

All this is in marked contrast to the gentleman's agreement everyone suspects exists between the British Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George. It will be recalled that Mr George was recently awarded a second five-year term, to run from July. For choice, the Chancellor would have had a change at the top, but a lack of credible alternatives, not to men-

tion pressure from the Prime Minister and the City, eventually persuaded him that continuity was the better path.

However, no one would find it in the least bit surprising if Mr George retired with a gong before his second five-year term is up, having by then seen through the important tasks of separating the bank's supervisory from its monetary policy functions and established the credibility of the bank as an independent determinant of interest rates. If there is such an agreement, it is not admitted to.

The whole point of these things is that though there might be a political fix, it should not be seen to exist. The effect would be to undermine the credibility of an institution which is meant to be free from political interference. In the shenanigans over the ECB, the politics of the situation was as visible as a 52-tonne truck. It would have been impossible to miss it. Mr Duisenberg then went on to irritate the world further by described the manner of his appointment as "absurd".

The upshot is that the integrity of the ECB has to some extent already been compromised. To what degree, and whether in the long run it matters very much, are more difficult questions to answer. Much depends on how Mr Duisenberg steers his course. So what sort of a man is he, and what can the markets expect of him?

Certainly, he seems of strongly independent character, unafraid to speak his mind whatever the embarrassment caused. That's got to be positive, as perhaps is his ultra-conservative approach to policy. With the pound already decisively in its peak against the mark, financial markets are beginning to anticipate just that. The change in sentiment is tangible.

Even two months ago it was still fashionable to think of sterling as a safe haven from a weak euro. Now it seems that sterling's strength may have been a cyclical thing after all. Further, the euro might be operated as a hard, strong currency, the more so after last weekend's fiasco, since the ECB will have something to prove. So many European leaders are putting out their chests and talking in terms of the euro rapidly becoming a reserve currency capable of looking the dollar in the face that perhaps we should expect nothing less.

These are early days, however, and we shouldn't count on any such outcome. The ECB is not De Nederlandsche Bank, the small and perfectly formed central bank where Mr Duisenberg earned his reputation. Keeping the lid on a potentially unruly 17 member multinational board is a different order of challenge altogether. Certainly, this will not be a board capable of being managed on the basis of agreement between gentlemen.

### Fund group makes 'dash for cash'

By Andrew Verity

SCOTTISH Equitable yesterday became the first fund manager in eight months to make a public "dash for cash", saying it had been prompted by fear of exaggerated profit forecasts.

The life insurer's fund management arm, Scottish Equitable Asset Management, said it believed analysts were overstating corporate earnings by as much as 3 per cent.

Profit forecasts by analysts put UK corporate earnings at 8 per cent in 1998 – but Scottish Equitable said its own analysts put the figure closer to 5 per cent.

Alistair Byrne, investment strategist, said: "We don't think the forecasts fairly discount the slowdown in UK economic growth this year and they don't take account of the sustained strength of the pound up until now. It does have implications for the valuations [of listed companies]."

Mr Byrne said analysts' forecasts appeared sometimes to be influenced by their employment in the same firm as stockbrokers.



Well served: The notes were bought by insurance firms

### US funds for Greenalls

GREENALLS, the pubs and hotels group, yesterday completed a private placement of \$125m (£75m) 10-year guaranteed senior notes. The proceeds will be used initially to repay short-term bank indebtedness and will provide a committed source of funds to support planned investment in the medium term. The notes were purchased by a group of US insurance companies. Alan Rothwell, the finance director, said he was delighted to return to the US market "in order to provide a continuing source of long-term capital to finance the continued expansion of our business".

THE COLLAPSE of Robert Feld's Resort Hotels group four years ago and his subsequent jailing for fraud continues to produce great waves of litigation. There are at least nine writs in circulation so far from various parties, seeking compensation over the £20m fraud. The strangest writs must surely be those from Roberta Feld, Mr Feld's sister, who is suing him for the money she lost in the Resort Hotel failure.

Even though Mr Feld is currently serving a six-year sentence at Coldingley Open Prison (recently reduced from eight years), he is also being sued by his sister together with his wife Tara, who is acting on behalf of his late mother.

Both writs have been issued via Harkays, the solicitors who previously represented Mr Feld during his criminal trial last year. Both writs are against Mr Feld; three other Resort directors, and the company's auditors Coopers & Lybrand. Mr Feld's mother's estate lost £200,000 when Resort went bust.

Meanwhile last week solicitors Edwin Coe issued two writs against Mr Feld and his

professional advisers on behalf of shareholders who also lost out. Both writs concern a prospectus for a rights issue to be sold on 30 April 1992 by Mr Feld, who forged the figures to make the business look more successful than it was. The rights issue aimed to raise £20.6m.

In one writ 252 individual shareholders are demanding damages from the remains of Resort Hotels. Mr Feld and 14 other defendants, including Coopers the auditors, Barclays De Zoete Wedd, the brokers to the issue, and a raft of nominees companies such as Barclay Share Nominees Limited.

This writ has been prompted by the Resort Hotels Shareholders Action Group, founded after a company meeting in 1993 which vividly revealed the parlous state of the company's finances. The group represents over 500 shareholders and is chaired by John Bancroft, who is named as one of the plaintiffs of last week's writ.

Other plaintiffs include The Leukaemia Research Fund, which invested £31,500 in 86,000 Resort shares between

May and October 1992.

In a second writ issued by Edwin Coe last week Invesco Enterprise Trust is demanding damages over the forged prospectus from nine defendants, again including Mr Feld, Coopers and Barclays De Zoete Wedd.

Shareholders have also issued four other writs via solicitors Leon Kaye Collins & Gittens, while debenture holders have issued one via Norton Rose, in an attempt to win compensation in the Resort affair.

All the writs share Coopers as one of the various defendants.

Regarding the two writs issued by Edwin Coe, a spokeswoman for Coopers said: "They have not been served, so we cannot comment."

Legal observers expect Resort to produce plenty more litigation before the dust finally settles.

THE FINANCIAL SERVICES Authority (FSA) is suing the Co-operative Insurance Society in a wrangle over the regulator's former head office in the City, which it leases from the Co-op.

The FSA, the new super-regulator, has already moved out of Gayelle House, Bunhill Row,

and further east in London's Canary Wharf in Docklands.

A new tenant for Bunhill Row, the Post Office, is ready to move in. The Co-op and the FSA are now in a commercial dispute over property rights, however, and last week the Post Office requested that the FSA launch a writ against the Co-op.

The FSA has now issued an originating summons seeking a declaration by the court that it has a tenant's right to assign the lease of the Bunhill office without the landlord's (Co-op's) consent.

The regulator wants to assign the Bunhill lease to the Post Office. The FSA's writ, issued through solicitors Clifford & Overy last week, concludes: "In the event that the Plaintiff has suffered any loss and damage by reason of the Defendant's conduct damages to be assessed."

THE FSA issued an entirely separate writ last week, through a different law firm, Clifford Chance, and this time pure in its role as a regulator.

On 1 May it started proceedings against a South African-owned investment

company, Paragon Securities, and its three directors – Simon James Parry, Dean Dempsey and Justin Stanley Russell.

The writ alleged breaches of section 47 and 57 of the Financial Services Act 1986, which cover misleading statements and advertising investment services in the UK without authorisation.

The FSA launched its action after Paragon had started to contact potential investors in the UK.

Yesterday, at a hearing before Mr Justice Lightman, Paragon Securities and the directors voluntarily gave undertakings to the Court not in the future to breach sections 47 and 57 of the Act.

Paragon has also indicated to the FSA that it intends to ensure that its future dealings with clients meet the standards required.

Justin Russell has resigned as a director and employee of Paragon Securities with effect from 7 May 1998.

Paragon Securities has agreed to make a contribution to the FSA's costs in the proceedings, and those proceedings have now been stayed.

### Commodities executive fined and expelled

THE Securities and Futures Authority (SFA), the financial markets watchdog, has fined and expelled a former executive of commodities trader TRX Futures, part of Germany's Neumann Gruppe. The SFA said it has expelled John Alexander Vieira Ribeiro from its registers of directors and senior executive officers, fined him £30,000 plus £8,100 in costs and has deemed him "not to be a fit and proper person to be registered with the SFA". The case relates to £450,000 (£270,000) of "surplus funds" which had been on the books of TRX Futures which Ribeiro later moved to accounts which were unrelated to the Neumann Gruppe.

### Pillar to buy retail park

PILLAR Property has formed a partnership to buy Fosse Park Shopping Park in Leicester for £145.5m from SPP Investment Management. The partnership is a joint venture with Schroder Exempt Property Unit Trust and SITQ International Inc, a subsidiary of Caisse de dépôt et placements du Québec. The partnership would also buy Fosse Park South, which was bought by Pillar last year. The combined value of the two parks is in the region of £205.5m.

### Northern warns on changes

NORTHERN Rock has attacked the process of telling customers of changes to their bank accounts, calling it "bureaucratic and potentially expensive". Adam Applegarth, executive director, said his company would notify every saver each time it changed interest rates or launched a new product. "It is however a bureaucratic and expensive exercise [which] may well be unrealistic for larger institutions," he said. The comments come a day after Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said she was extremely concerned at the behaviour of some banks. Last month, Northern Rock angered customers by switching thousands of them into three new bank accounts. Many will suffer lower interest rates.

### Wembley chief quits

ALAN COPPIN, Wembley's chief executive, is leaving to join Compass Group. He will remain as chief executive until 30 September in which role he will continue to be responsible for overseeing the disposal of Wembley Stadium to the English National Stadium Trust. A new chief executive is being sought.

### Newton in talks with US bank

FOREIGN interest in British investment banks was undermined after Newton Asset Management was linked with Mellon Bank of the US. Mellon Bank is believed to be in advanced talks with Newton, which manages £1.0bn and is worth around £150m. City sources confirmed they were still advising big US banks on acquisitions in the UK. According to Bacon & Woodrow, the investment consultants, US banks fear they will fall behind Europe as the Euro takes effect.

### Listing for Geo

GEO Interactive Media Group, a developer of innovative Internet application multimedia software, is to move up the main market from the Alternative Investment Market with a placing of new shares. The listing will be by way of a placing of 18 million new ordinary shares in the company at between 125p and 150p each to raise £19.75m.

### COMPANY RESULTS

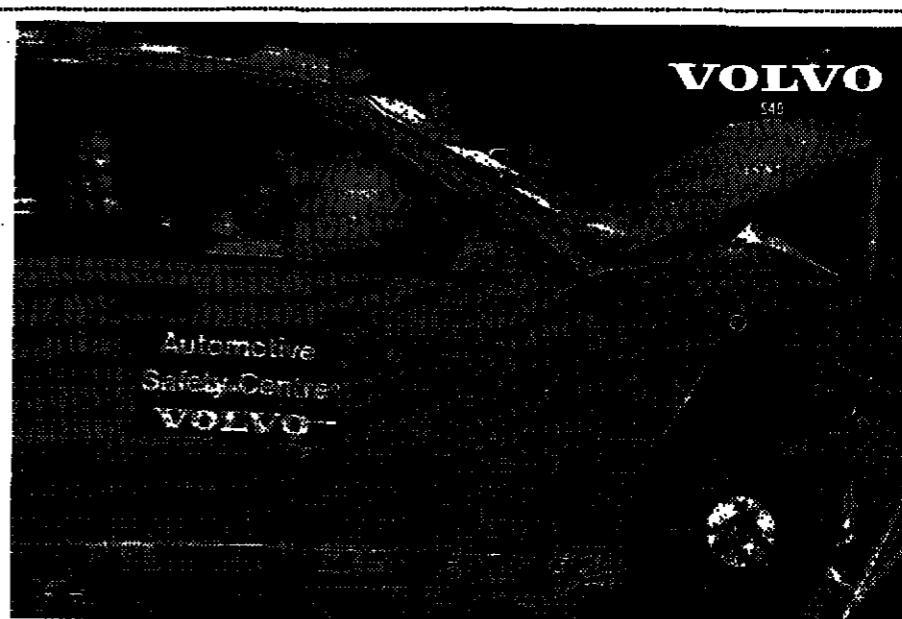
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Bester Level Group (F)	- (F)	0.882m (0.503m)	6.42p (2.70p)	2.0 (1.3p)
Forbes GR (F)	567.22m (301.85m)	4.884m (3.480m)	0.28p (0.25p)	n/a (n/a)
FJ - Final (F) - Interim ↑ EPS is pre-exceptional *Dividend to be paid as a FD				

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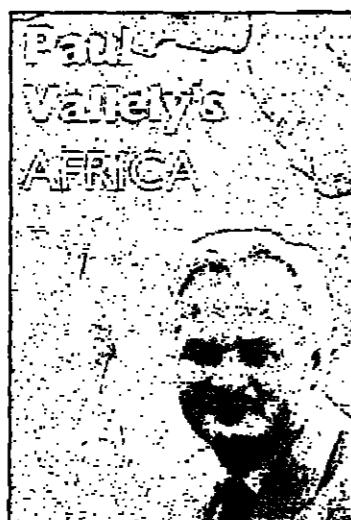
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# The people the banks forgot



**Zambia:** After a decade of economic advance, Africa is sliding back into poverty and people are suffering again. There are no jobs, little food and infant mortality is rising



Helping out: Young girls fetch water in Zambia, where gender typecasting begins early

Photograph: Paul Valley

and services and privatised public industries for sale to foreign investors.

"And still the debt is such that every one of these people owes the West \$950 (£594) each," said the feisty Zambian woman, Mulima Kufekisa, who had taken me into Missi. She heads up the SAP monitoring project, which the Zambian bishop's conference has established, with funding from the Catholic aid agency Cafod. "So Zambia spends five times as much paying interest on debt as it does on education - and three times as much as we spend on healthcare."

But there is a powerful resilience in Missi too. It was there, most memorably, in Alice Noalisa who each day dons her nurse's uniform to work in a church feeding programme for 185 of the area's most malnourished children and 83 orphans. She works without pay.

She and her children live off a single bowl of the maize porridge - *nsshima* - a day. "Life is hard," she said with devastating understatement. "Five years ago, before the SAP, everything was quite OK. We could afford bread and eggs for breakfast, fish or meat relish with the *nsshima* at lunch, and vegetables for dinner. Now we have none of that, not even a cup of tea before bed."

All this has nothing to do with structural adjustment, Mr Gedion Njoko, the head of the World Bank in Zambia, insisted when I went to see him. It is the result simply of poverty and poor economic management by the Zambian authorities. "Who was paying for her three meals a day before?" he asked. His question was a purely economic one. It seemed, to him, to have no ethical dimension.

That is why next Saturday tens of thousands of activists - in what is expected to be the biggest Third World action since Live Aid - plan to throw a human chain around the Birmingham conference centre where the G8 leaders will meet. To remind them of the ethics that lurk beneath the economics. I would, I promised Alice, join them.

**T**HE name is written Missi, but it is pronounced Missus. The land on which the shanty town is built once belonged to an Englishwoman called Mrs Cook. It is now divided into two compounds. The other, naturally enough, is called Kuk.

If there is a comedy to its name, there is precious little to smile at about life in Missi, one of the poorest suburbs in the Zambian capital Lusaka. The fine dust blows in swirls around your head as you cross the railway line which separates the place from the more prosperous Kadwe estate. Only this is not dust. It is dried human excrement which floods the compound when the pit latrines overflow in the rain. It sinks into the ground and the fierce heat cooks it and powders it for the wind to twist in clouds which clog your eyes and nose and throat.

This is a world of desperate enterprise. Everywhere by the sides

of the dirt tracks the people of Missi try to scrape a living by selling to one another. Small boys sell dried caterpillars and locusts from ratty bags on ramshackle tables. Old women sit in the dust with tiny amounts of wild fruits set out like dusty jewels on old cloths. Those with a little capital have bought big bags of sugar or mealie meal which they have sub-divided into the minute packets which is all that can be afforded by people who buy only enough for the next meal, if they can pay for one.

There are no jobs. A handful of the men once worked in the copper belt, the north, but the mines have been shut down in the process of privatisation. With the mines went the housing, the schools and the clinics they provided. Their state equivalents never existed, or

have had fees introduced which exclude the children of the poor.

This is the new baseline for ordinary people in Africa. For them, life has gone backwards since I was last in Zambia 10 years ago. The story is the same throughout the continent. For one billion people, development is being thrown into reverse. After decades of steady economic advance since colonial times Africa is sliding back into poverty.

The children around me were almost all younger than they looked: almost half of all African children are so malnourished that their growth is stunted. Infant mortality is rising: one in five of the children around me in Missi now die before the age of five. Last time I was in Zambia the average life expectancy, I recall, was 56. Today it is 42.

School attendance is falling. The story is the same in health. People

buy medicines, if they can, after diagnosing themselves because they cannot afford the clinic fees. I met one man whose child was ill. What was his greatest worry? He paused to think. "That I won't have the money to buy a coffin," he said finally.

**W**hat is the cause of all this? It is Third World debt. When individuals go broke we eventually draw a line under the debt and declare them bankrupt. Not so with nations.

"Countries never go bust," in the words of Walter Wriston, who once led the banking giant, Citicorp, to become top lender to the Third World in those halcyon days when interest rates were lower than inflation and the poor world was told they would be mugs not to borrow.

But the world economy shifted. And nations which could not go bust

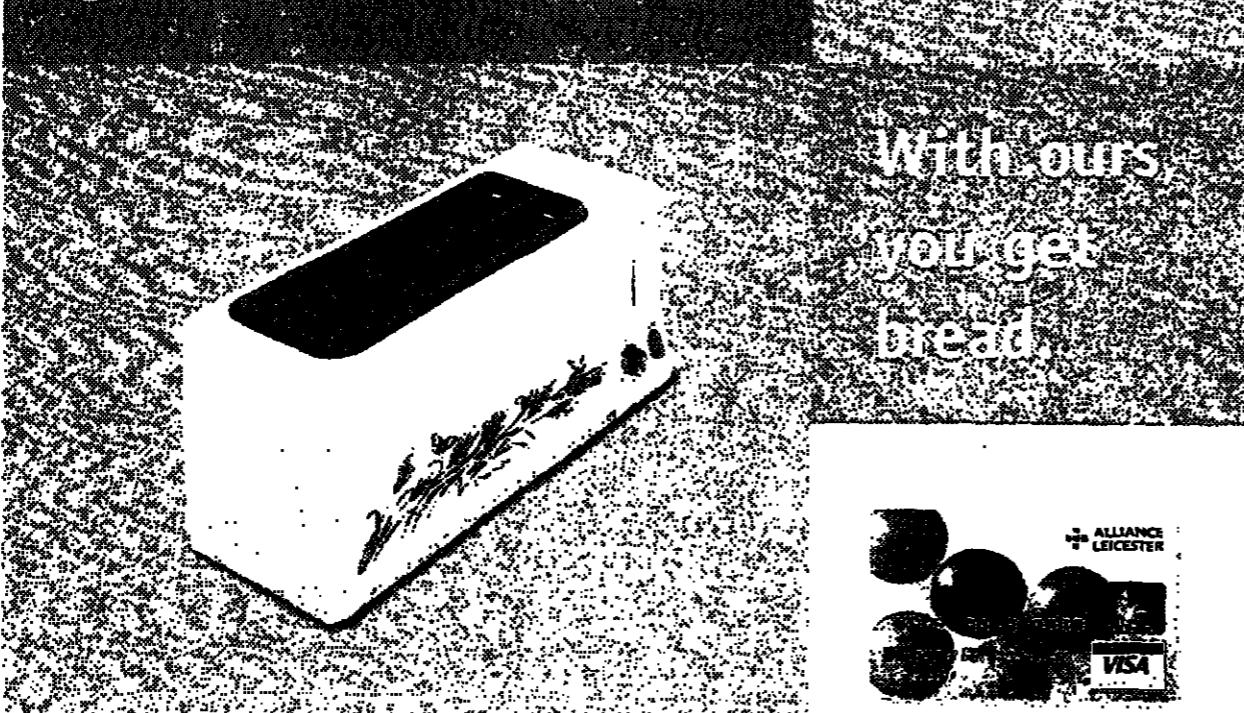
have fallen into an abyss of economic degradation in their attempts to keep paying just the interest on the ever-mounting debt.

The Western world sent in its financial policemen, the International Monetary Fund, to ensure that the poor nations could keep paying.

Strict "adjustment" packages were introduced to reorientate Third World economies towards debt repayment. Under structural adjustment programmes (aptly known as SAPs) poor countries have: cut subsidies on the food staples relied on by the poor; taken land from small subsistence farms for large-scale export crops such as mangoes or cut flowers; devalued their currencies; lowering export earnings and increasing import costs; slashed spending on basic education and primary health care; cut jobs and wages for workers in government industries

Cashholders must be aged 18 or over. Applications are subject to status. Written quotations available on request. For Purchases and Balance Transfers, interest will be charged on a daily basis at the standard rate of 1.38% per annum (17.9% APR (variable), 19.7% APR (fixed)) for cash advances. In calculating the APR we have not taken into account the effect of any Money Back interest which will be paid on purchases made under the Money Back Scheme. The standard rate of 1.38% APR (fixed) or 11.9% APR (variable) (whichever is lower) will be charged at the same time interest will be charged from the date the customer makes the account. Conditions and restrictions apply to both the Money Back Scheme, the Money Back Purchase and the Introductory Rate of Balance Transfers. Full details available on request and are included in the application pack. Within 25 days of the date of your monthly statement, you must repay at least 3% of the amount outstanding (ES minimum). The standard Money Back on purchases is 0.5% up to £2,999.99 and 1% above. Purchases for business or trade purposes are not eligible. You will receive Money Back on any eligible interest you pay. Eligible interest is 5% of the interest debited to your account. Handling charge of 1.5% (£2 minimum) payable on cash advances and credit card cheques (other than promotional ones). For security and tracing purposes telephone calls will be recorded or monitored. Correct as at 2/5/98.

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# TIME OFF

## TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 9 May 1998



PICTURE OF THE WEEK Soaking up the sun at Syon Park. Monarch and tree nymph butterflies by Tom Pliston. To order a 12x9 print (price £15) call 0171-293 2534.

## Week in, week out

William Hartston signs up for the single European song title: 'When Will You Save Your Boom-Bang-a-Dinge-Loo For Me, piep piep?'

It is a little-known fact that if you multiply the number of entrants (25) in today's Eurovision Song Contest by the number of times (four) Norway has scored *nul points*, then add the number of times the contest has been held (43 including today's), and finally subtract the number of UK victories (five), you get exactly the number of times the word "why" occurred in the lyrics of Spain's winning song "La, la, la" in 1968. The other odd thing about the Eurovision Song Contest is that instruments are tuned to A at 442 Hz rather than the usual concert pitch A at 440 Hz. The effect is to make the songs sound a little on the sharp side, perhaps to counteract the flatness of the rest of the event.

Yet for cognoscenti, the attraction lies not in the pitch of the music, but in the timbre of the lyrics. Will anything match the perfect Euro-blandness of past winners "Boom-Bang-a-Bang" (1969), "Ding Dinge Dong" (1975), "A Ba Ni Bi" (1978), or Sweden's somewhat latvian "Digg Loo - Digg Ley" (1984)? Will there be anything as potently meteorological as "Flagnad av en Stomwind", which brought Sweden another victory in 1991?

There is no doubt that winning titles have become more introspective over the years. After "Save Your Kisses for Me" in 1976 and "Hold Me Now" in 1987, followed closely by "Ne Partez Pas Sans Moi" and "Rock Me"

in 1988 and 1989, the depth of true Euro-doubt finally burst through in 1992 with "Why Me?" a question that remains tantalisingly unresolved.

We shall not find the answer this year. Only more questions. The Irish entry asks "Is Always Over Now?" and with eight of the 28 lines in the lyrics ending with question marks, the whole song sounds like something from a specialist round of *Mastermind*... answering questions on Romance, your time starts now. How can you say it's over now? How can you wave all goodbye? Is always over now? Does it never last that long? Were the feelings that I had ever right or was it wrong? You passed on just one question: Why is it that Ireland wins the Eurovision Song Contest so often? And the answer is that everyone who doesn't want England to win always votes for Ireland, and everyone likes voting for smaller nations who sing bouncy songs in English.

The Spanish entry, "What Will I Do Without You", is even more quizzical, with 10 questions in 29 lines, including the tautological "What will I do without you if you're not here any more?" Probably much the same as I'd do without you if you were here any more.

The most surprising aspect of this year's songs is the degree of agreement between nations of the former Yugoslavia. With

Macedonia (which we have to call "Fyrom" to avoid annoying the Greeks) singing "Somebody Stop the Dawn" and Croatia singing "May the Sun Never Rise", it is clear that Eurovision has succeeded where Cyrus Vance and Dr David Owen failed.

Last year was the first time the Eurovision was won by a song with "Love" in the title (though "Amour" had appeared in two wins

### True Euro-doubt finally burst through in 1992 with 'Why Me?', a question that remains tantalisingly unresolved

ners in the early days of the competition). Perhaps hoping this is the start of a trend, the entries this time include "When Love Turns to Hate" (Poland), "Love is" (Sweden), "The One that I Love" (Malta) and "Guido Loves You" (Germany), the last of which has the promising refrain "Piep, piep, piep, ich hab' Dich lieb" and promises "schick ich Euch meinen Liebeswets, Nussecken und Himbeeren" (I'll send you my

love tokens - nut biscuits and raspberry ice-cream). What more can a woman ask? Gastronomically, this should run home a clear winner, but food has rarely attracted the judges, unless you count the 1966 winner, "Merci Cherie".

The Estonian entry "Mere Lapsed" appears at first glance to be the tale of a love that, unlike the Polish one that has turned to hate, has merely lapsed - perhaps the story of a couple forgetting to renew their marriage licence. Yet it turns out that the words of the title are Estonian and mean Children of the Sea. The lyrics tell the story of lovers stealing off in a boat together: "We'll challenge every storm that comes along, united with the power that we belong," according to the translation on the BBC Eurovision website (though, to be fair, it probably makes more sense in Estonian). All the same, lines such as "We'll harness raging winds to lead us on" and "riding on the depth of our despair" suggest that their romance might do better if they first waited for the weather to improve.

The UK entry "Where Are You?" sensibly stays on land in the pursuit of love. It starts "I see a picture in a frame, I see a face without a name, Riding alone on an empty train". She then sings: "I would drive through the rain." Presumably in pursuit of

the train, though unless it's a slow suburban service I wouldn't give her much chance of catching it, and when she goes on, "You could unlock these chains", it sounds as though she'd be much happier on a bicycle anyway. Still, if he didn't even bother to tell her his name, I fear the romance is doomed.

But will anything come close to those record 138 fa-la-las in 1968? The only challenge this time comes from the Finnish entry "Aava", of which the BBC's "free translation" begins: "Wide Earth, open the wide Earth, Wide Earth, open the wide earth, Beauty, greatness, Beauty, greatness, Calm. Wide Earth, open the Wide Earth, Wide Earth open the Wide Earth. Wide." The second verse continues in the same spirit, though there is a "Humomansa" just before the end. Apparently there are only six different words in the Finnish original, which may be a good thing because we are told that the singer is a Swedish speaker and her Finnish is not all that good.

Taking everything into account, and remembering that nobody ever votes for the eastern Europeans, only countries of the former Austro-Hungarian empire ever vote for anyone singing in German, and no panel from a country that has signed up for the single European currency will vote for the UK, my money's on Ireland. They always win it anyway.



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# Sun, sea, sushi and mash

**Fi Glover** gets off her gently bronzed behind for a spot of forced entertainment in Phuket. Welcome to Club Med, Thai-style

"Participate. Earn your lunch. This is not the Holiday Inn." This is what shrieks out at 12.30pm every day while you are lying on the beautifully arranged sunloungers by the pool at Club Med, Phuket.

It's the clarion call of Greg, a dicky South African geezer with dot-to-dot freckles and an unmeriting grin. The fact that his tan only starts from above his ankles gives away the fact that he's the golf instructor ... but unfortunately for him his duties don't end there. Every day he has to stand by the pool with a loud hailer and try to get an international factor of sunbathers – that is the right collective noun – to get off their gently bronzed backsides and do something in the gently blowing breeze of the Andaman Sea.

I have a problem with organised entertainment, especially if there aren't serious Price is Right five-door saloons up for grabs. And on Day One I definitely did not want my poolside reverie disturbed by lots of people doing the Conga in the pool. I turned the other bikini-clad cheek and put my stuffy little British nose in the air. On Day Two my thought process ran along the lines of "I'm an international traveller who likes to explore strange regions of Bhutan ... but ... mmmmm this is fun to watch in a patronising kind of way." And you've guessed it: by Day Three I was preparing my dive at the start of the International Club Med Olympics Race alongside Valerie from Nice (I won the silver). I had also fully entered the spirit of the packaged world of Club Méditerranée – pioneer of all-inclusive activity holidays in 130 "villages" around the world, in poor financial shape at the moment and guilty of overusing the word *participate*.

But although you might want to hate it at the start, I bet you a bag full of beads that by the end you're having a good time. And let's get the bead thing sorted right now. Your package at Club Med includes all accommodation, sport, food and drink at meals – if, however you want a drink from the bar you have to buy it with beads. These aren't romantic little cowrie shells collected from the beach at dawn. They are plastic orange and yellow things that you can stick together to make necklaces. I think they are just a careful way of disguising how horrendously expensive the bar is. Get into the Nineties and give me a smart card.

Club Med also has its own language. Greg – as an employee – is a GO and I as a passing guest was a GM. All Gentil Officers have to eat, drink, mingle but not sleep with all Gentil Members – although you do get the feeling some of them may have taken hospitality to horizontal levels. Meals are at certain times, a Sun Dance takes place round the pool in an early Pan's People style at midday every day and you need a secret code to make an international call out of your room. Club Med may be an apt first impression.

We were lucky to be given the tour of the "village" by Grinning Greg who kindly informed us that the elephant ride was a waste of time and that the sports centre was right at the other end of the resort, but since we didn't look like we'd be needing to tee off at 8am or play a quick serve and volley before lunch so he wouldn't bother showing us that. It was a lovely pinch of reality salt on the side of an



Canvas chais longues there are 130 Club Med villages around the world. Photo: Brendan Byrne/Tony Stone Images

all too effusive plate of unpalatable bonhomie from some of the other GOs.

Participation turned out not to be our forte, though. But slopping out on Kata Beach we were much better at. Kata Beach is that stretch of white sand that you hope Thailand will always have: bobbing long boats; sunsets to die for, all pinky and dusky; and a tarpaulin under which a dozen smiling massage ladies ease away your troubles with tiger balm, baby oil and some vertebrae crunching hand techniques. You can have a massage in the Spa at Club Med but it costs seven times as much and you have to listen to piped music. Which would you rather: the sound of Thai girls giggling at your bumpy European thighs or Michael Bolton classics?

Most of our bumps were caused by the food in Club Med. This reflects the clientele who range from Japanese, through Korean to Italian to French to us. The Harvester help-yourself principle works here and your selection of cuisine ranges from Japanese to Korean to Italian to French... By the end of a week our choices were positively surreal: one tiger prawn, two slices of pizza and a bowl of Thai soup. My favourite was sushi with mashed potato or the ultimate

hangover cure, three types of potato: fried, mashed and roast. So we ate and slept and marvelled at how smooth everyone else's thighs looked for seven days until we had almost lost the power of speech.

On our last night in Phuket we wandered back from Kata town to find something akin to hell being enacted around the pool. It was a funfair complete with greasy pole, coconut shies and roulette tables with fake money. At first we thought that was going a bit far. But everyone else was having such a good time. That's Club Med for you, it just keeps going. You can help yourself to as much as you like, or just pick and choose and you'll only really hate it if you do turn your nose up at everything ... apart from anything else that is a bad way to sunbathe; you'll get a nasty Judith Chalmers turtle neck effect by the end of two weeks.

I would personally recommend doing three things before going though - make your own bar beads out of melted plastic, rent my mate Cath out for her late night cabaret act which she performed to tumultuous applause after the funfair had packed up and gone – and check that Greg is still there before you go. Do try that mashed potato and sushi combination. You know you want to.

## ALL YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT ALL-INCLUSIVES

Single European Currency? Forget it. With an all-inclusive holiday, you don't need a single penny, peseta or pfennig. Club Med (071-581 1161) has no monopoly on the cashless holiday – which is partly why the company has had fairly dismal financial results recently. As the mass-market operators have moved in, four times as many of us take all-inclusive holidays than in 1995.

All-inclusives let you budget more accurately; a zealous bargain-seeker could probably survive a fortnight without spending a bean (or a baht). But they are inevitably divisive: fences must be built to prevent the beer and buffet falling into the wrong hands. There is a financial disincentive to escape and see the world beyond the swimming pool. All-pervasive all-

inclusives commoditise travel, reducing it to an arbitrary sun, sea and sangria sin final experience. Check out the all-inclusive brochures issued by Airtours, Cosmos, First Choice, Thomson and Sunworld. If your travel agent seems inordinately keen to book you one, it could be because he or she earns 10 per cent on everything you eat and drink. One brochure you won't find at the

travel agent is the one issued by Club Mark Warner (0171-761 7000), a direct-sell operator which has specialised in high-quality all-inclusive holidays in the Mediterranean for much longer than the mass-market operators. The other all-inclusive location that I have particularly enjoyed is the original: Budlin's (0990 010111). Simon Calder

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**SIMON CALDER**

What is the collective noun for a group of female television presenters travelling together? A network? An overbooking? A lottery? Whatever, several of our most notable TV personalities spent an unhappy Bank Holiday Monday evening at Nice airport, when they'd much rather have been in Luton.

They were among more than 100 holiday-makers waiting for a delayed EasyJet flight home from the south of France, which finally arrived five hours late in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

In common with other airlines, EasyJet has no legal obligation to make financial amends if a flight is delayed for technical reasons. But if the experience of *Independent* readers Sheila and Cliff Chatten or Reading is anything to go by, the unfortunate passengers should at least get their money back.

"We were booked to fly to Barcelona on Thursday evening. The motorway traffic had been appalling, the weather ghastly, and, on reaching Luton, we weren't too pleased to

hear that our 7.47 (the time, not the make) flight had been 'indefinitely delayed'. Apparently the plane had been taken out of service for repairs after being struck by lightning. (To digress for a moment: my colleague Harriet O'Brien swears that on her recent fear-of-flying course she was assured that planes could not be struck by lightning, due to the absence of an electrical earth; comments, please.)

The Chattens continue: "We sat around to wait, eating and drinking courtesy of a £3.50 voucher per passenger. Our flight eventually took off about 20 past midnight; the captain was charmingly apologetic about the delay and the drinks on board were free. An inconvenience, certainly, but not a catastrophe."

"When an unsolicited letter arrived from EasyJet some two weeks later, we imagined the contents before opening it: a half-price offer on some future flight, maybe, to tempt us back to the airline? No, better than that..."

The letter the Chattens received was from Stelios Haji-Ioannou, EasyJet's chairman, promising a full refund. "Since we have failed to deliver on our basic promise of providing reliable transport to you at the best possible price, I feel it is inappropriate that we keep your fare for the above flight."

While EasyJet is an airline whose name invites hyphenated constructions such as "low-cost", "no-frills" and "Luton-based", Air France

should resound with terms such as "style" and "panache". Not, however, in third class.

When George Orwell made his journey to the French capital in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, he sailed third class from Tilbury to Dunkirk. The modern equivalent can be found on the newly launched three-class system on Air France flights between Heathrow and Paris.

Many airlines use a three-class system on long-haul flights: Eva Air has four, on trips to Taiwan. But on

**Certainly anyone stumping up £420.40 for a round-trip business ticket deserves all the free champagne they can wolf down in half-an-hour**

30-minute journey it seems needlessly elaborate.

It works like this:

Passengers are segregated by fare paid, with business class at the front and "full-fare economy" in the middle. We discount travellers are crammed in at the back. Outbound, the promised "breakfast" turns out to be a stale croissant; inbound, the forbidden champagne is wheeled scornfully past third class, and anyone

## Corners of the planet that are forever France

If it's Club Med, it must be French – and a paradise for children. David Bowen investigates

Club Med is another country.

France, to be precise. I have been to one in Italy and one in Ibiza, and my in-laws have been to Club Med in Morocco, Turkey and Sicily. They are all in France.

Nearly all the staff above cleaning level are French, and their knowledge of other languages is rarely good. The local doctor in Ibiza, fluent in English, German and, of course, Spanish, was baffled that one of the biggest complexes on the strip was inhabited by people with whom he could not communicate. But that's the

French for you. When they go on holiday, they take their cities with them. I can't quite understand why they like it (I prefer abroad to be foreign), but if you want to go to France and you are not bothered what country it is in, Club Med has what country.

The food, for one. French chefs French food – all free, or at least included in the package price. Wander through the heaving buffets at lunch time, or tunnel your way through infinite variety in the evening. Tough. Unfortunately the wine is not French – it is whatever local plonk has been shipped in.

My party laid no claim to subtle palates, but even we were surprised when a blind tasting in Ibiza revealed that none of us could distinguish between the red, the white and the rosé.

Then there is the unpressured atmosphere. Club Med is, in essence, an upmarket holiday camp, with plenty of games and entertainments if you want to join in. But you don't have to, and no one (except perhaps the camp joker) will bother you if you want to grill gently in the sun and read pulp fiction. You can find yourself so seduced by the atmosphere that cynicism can turn into tolerance and even enthusiasm. Many hard-nosed holiday-makers have ended up joining in the end-of-evening knees-up. Embarrassing, but true.

Some of the Club Meds are attractive. In 1996 we stayed in Metaponto, on the instep of Italy. Its residential village is draped delightfully in bougainvillea, and the restaurant is a strikingly original wooden structure (though not, as we discovered during a rainstorm, a waterproof one). The almost-all-in pricing will appeal to many. Prices look high (close to £900 a week in August at Metaponto) but you can sleep, eat, drink (wine at least), sail, canoe, go to the gym, play golf and tennis etc without spending a penny extra. It's only if you want a drink from the bar that you should take care: Club Med's answer to the euro, the red, green and yellow coupon, is not recommended for those with budgetary restraints.

But the main reason my extended family has descended serially on Club Meds is that many of them are geared for children. The ones we chose all had Mini Clubs – for five-year-olds up – and some had failed to do much for the brand. The way to counter this inconsistency is to carry out research beforehand. It is possible to have a wonderful holiday at Club Med and to come back relaxed and slightly plump – with your children in a similar state, having spent much of the time away from you. But only if you go to the right place. You can choose what you want from the brochure: children's facilities, gym, circus school, multimedia workshop (whatever that is). But it is worth sniffing around for recommendations, or lack of them. Many Britons have visited a Club Med, so don't book without asking around.

with the temerity to ask for some is offered a can of warm lager instead.

Air France says the arrangement reflects fairly the amount each passenger has paid for a seat, and certainly anyone stumping up £420.40 for a round-trip business ticket deserves all the free champagne he or she can wolf down in half-an-hour. Meanwhile, until the Tilbury to Dunkirk ferry service starts up again, I'll be the one with a packed lunch on Eurostar.

**Sue Sutton** writes from Singapore about "the mysterious disappearance of the drinks trolley on Singapore Airlines' flights to and from London instead they bring round a tray of orange juice, beer and fizzy wine. Other drinks can be ordered, but arrive only after a considerable delay and consist of a thimbleful of your chosen tipple. Obtaining wine with the meal is similarly complicated."

Dr Sutton asked the airline why the policy had been adopted: "I was told it was 'speedier'. On a 13-hour flight, I wouldn't have thought time a big consideration!"

"While understanding that there have been some problems with drunken passengers harassing the 'Singapore girls', and certainly not advocating mass drunkenness on long-haul flights, I am surprised that an airline with such a reputation for excellent service and one that is, in many ways, way ahead of its competitors on this route, has fallen down to the level of a basic charter company."



Midwest  
medley: sunset  
on Lake  
Michigan, left;  
Old Mission  
Lighthouse,  
below

Photographs:  
Robert Harding  
Picture Library

## Great Lakes ... and the beaches aren't bad

Rolling surf, deep forests ... You name it, Michigan's got it. Donald Hiscock is smitten by the mitten-shaped state

"If you look at my little finger, just by the nail, that's where I come from. Over here, that's kind of where we are right now," said the friendly waitress at Don's Drive In, a pink-and-blue recreation of 'Fifties' restaurant. It looked like the one where Fred Flintstone orders the brontosaurus burger that's so big it capsizes his car. Don's is situated on Grand Traverse Bay, next to Pirate's Cove mini-golf and in a perfect situation for spectacular sunsets. Our waitress for the evening was happy to locate us in that time-honoured way that people from Michigan have, by holding out their hand and pointing confidently to a knuckle or a crease or a mole. It's a quaint global positioning device; Michigan is famous for being shaped like a mitten.

We spent a summer holiday up in the north-west corner of that mitten in Traverse City, the cherry-growing capital, as it is known – even if the volume production is now out west. We lollled around Lake Michigan, revelling in a state more famous to us in Britain for cars, Kellogg's Corn Flakes and our tendency to mispronounce it Mitch-igan. In the past I had dismissed Michigan as being synonymous with *crime and industry*, but it's home to the real Midwest.

Michigan may be bordered by Great Lakes, but there is also an abundance of far smaller lakes, with beaches and forests.

My family and I don't dream of revisiting Traverse City for the cherry products, or the enormous burgers and cholesterol-inducing milk shakes; we want to get back to the rolling sun and white, sandy beaches. Our favourite trick back in England is to put photos of beaches down on the table when after-dinner conversation turns to foreign travel. "Where do you think that is?" we ask. "Barbados? The Algarve?" they guess. Most are bowled over when we tell them. We do the hand held up like a mitten bit after that.

Front Street, Traverse City is the main thoroughfare. On Friday evenings in summer they close it to traffic, and the shopkeepers open stalls on the street. The Downtown area becomes a mini-carnival site with musicians, country dancers and low-key street entertainers.

Here the deputy sheriff, leaning against his long white Chevrolet, talked to us about England, where his sister lives in Godalming. "Have you heard of Godalming?" he asked. He was tickled pink to be told that we'd been there. He, like most other friendly folk in Northern Michigan, liked to hear our accent. "Thanks for visiting with us," they say. When you're done talking they thank you for the conversation.

The city was founded by lumber barons last century, whose grand mansions are still to be seen on Sixth Street. The Boardman



to the north of Traverse City on the Leelanau peninsula. We joined other families trudging up the seriously high dune that rises to more than 400ft, only to find yet more sand stretching out in front of us. And, yes, the reserved English tourists couldn't help themselves and joined in the fun of rolling all the way down again, laughing, screaming and getting a mouthful of grit. "Way to go, man!"

Our favourite beach was on the narrow, 17-mile peninsula that pokes out north from Traverse City. This is an area of comfortable homes that are beginning to use up the land once occupied by acres of cherry orchards. At the tip of the peninsula is Old Mission Lighthouse, set right on the 45th parallel, level with Bordeaux; hence the proliferation of vines in the area. Cherry-flavoured wine, anyone? Of course, we'd come not for the wine but for the beach at the state park next to the lighthouse. The sand shelves so gently, you can walk out through smooth rocks in clear water for about 100 yards. We were there one evening and watched an awesome ball of red sun sink into the lake. But after the pleasure came the pain, as the bugs began to bite.

For all that, one of the simplest and best moments of a holiday up in Michigan is when you sit out at night and look at the stars. We were staying out of town

where there was little street lighting. The sky was blacker than we had ever seen it, and we gazed at the Milky Way and constellations that we hadn't realised were there all the time.

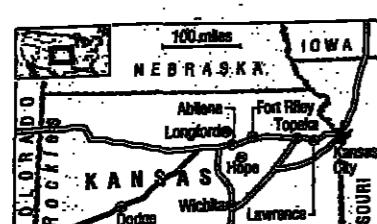
It's corny, I know, but after the children had gone to sleep on the last night of our stay, we couldn't help but make a wish out loud when a shooting star blazed across the heavens, distracting us from the soporific sounds of the waves lapping the lakeshore just a few yards away. We wished that we could return soon – every summer would be just fine – back to that place I can point to quickly in the palm of my hand, thanks to Lindy at Don's Drive In.

*Detroit is served daily from Heathrow by British Airways, and from Gatwick by Northwest. Alternatively, nearby Chicago has flights from Heathrow (Air India, American Airlines, BA and United), Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester (all American Airlines). Fares in high summer are likely to be pricey, but until mid-June expect to pay about £300 return through discount agents.*

*Discount travel agents may rent you a car for less than the hire companies offer direct; you should find an economy car for about £30 per day, fully inclusive. If you prefer not to rent a car, the air pass offered by Southwest (01293 596677) is excellent value.*

## Land of wheat and rodeos

Come to Kansas if you yearn for the romance of the rodeo, a glimpse into frontier days and a chance to see Ike Eisenhower's childhood home. Anne Perret was there



"One Kansas farmer feeds 101 people – and you," declared a sign on the state's main road, Interstate 70. And if you're looking for a holiday destination that combines cowboys and history with giga-bushels of wheat, there's no place like Kansas. Kansas City, a farmer told me, "is the breadbasket of our nation, ma'am".

As you drive west on I-70 through the Flint Hills, a spectacular landscape of rolling hills, wooded river valleys and tall-grass prairie stretches to the horizon. From the interstate road, cowboys can be seen moving their herds across this quintessential American countryside. And south of I-70 is the Homestead Ranch – a women-only cattle ranch. If you fancy yourself as a hard-riding wranglerette, you can brand, rope and herd here.

Pioneers streamed across Kansas in

the mid-19th century on the Oregon, Santa Fe and California Trails. Near Topeka, there are antique carts gorged into the prairie by wagon wheels. Fifty miles further west stands Fort Riley, built to protect "pilgrims" on the Oregon Trail from marauding Indians. Now it is one of the US Army's most important bases. It also

offers the excellent US Cavalry Museum, a buffalo herd and Quarters 24 (better known as the Custer House) which provides a glimpse of the romance and trials of military life after the Civil War. George Armstrong Custer commanded Fort Riley, before riding away to the Battle of Little Big Horn.

Off the interstate road are towns such as Industry, Cottonwood Falls and Enterprise, with streets lined with reminders of frontier days – hitching posts, jailhouses and old false-fronted stores. At Longford, the sign on Slim's Place reads "Hamburgers & Ammunition". These are tiny communities, and their young people are leaving for the cities. At Hope – on a seat bearing the town's name – someone has added "less" in black paint. We stayed in Abilene, featured in a

corral of Westerns. Once it was a wild town, the terminus of the Chisholm Trail. Cowboys drove millions of longhorns up from Texas, to be shipped by rail to Chicago. Even now, immense, meowing Santa Fe trains rumble through the "dee-po".

A whiff of gunsmoke lingers in Abilene. In the 1860s it was a gaudy mix of gambling halls, brothels and saloons. The town hired Wild Bill Hickok to impose law and order, but one night he killed a drunken gambler in a gunfight before accidentally gunning down his own deputy. The townspeople were aghast – a lawman who couldn't tell the good guy from the bad guy was a danger to everyone. They got him out of town fast.

In "Old Abilene Town", original structures stand beside replicas. In summer there are strutting saloon girls, fast-draw competitions and a cowboy encampment where cowboy poet Jack Darrow draws stories about spooked herds and round-ups. Rodeos are held all over Kansas; the best is probably Abilene's Wild Bill Hickok rodeo, which opens with a parade. It is part of a week-long county fair, a showcase

for quilting, canning, horseshoe-tossing and, inevitably, wheat. It's a chance to mingle with folks wearing cowboy hats, big belt buckles and Stetsons, and load up with calorie-busting fair food: corn dogs, hog wings, funnel cakes and root beer floats.

Abilene has two historic homes open to visitors. The Seelye Mansion was built by a patent medicine manufacturer enriched by Waco-USA, "health restorer for man, stock and poultry". Dr Seelye and his spinster daughters had one house rule: never throw anything away. The result is a time capsule of Midwest turn-of-the-century ephemera.

President Dwight Eisenhower's boyhood home is nothing fancy – a simple house on the wrong side of the tracks. His mother was proud of her small parlour: its dime-store vases, the patchwork cushions she embroidered with her seven sons' names, and her books. Beyond her net curtains is something that made her prouder still – her son Dwight's presidential library. House and library are part of the Eisenhower Center. There's an Ike statue

– a typical pose in uniform, hands on hips. There's a museum stuffed with memorabilia: the "lucky coins" Ike carried throughout the Second World War; "I Like Ike" presidential campaign buttons; and Mamie's hats – feathered, beaded and frisbee-like. Ike and Mamie are buried here.

Leaving Abilene, you may go west to Dodge City and the Rockies, but we went east, to Lawrence, an attractive town that's home to the University of Kansas. Lawrence was founded by New England abolitionists. In the 1850s it was an underground railroad stop, an improved route for runaway slaves escaping to freedom in Canada. In Old West Lawrence, you can take a self-guided tour of the sites where townspeople courageously clothed, fed and hid these black Americans.

Fascinating stuff, and you'll have the place pretty much to yourself. Kansas, after all, isn't famed as a tourist magnet. But I'll be going back – if only to see the monument to its farmers. America's agricultural hall of fame is in Bonner Springs: sodbuster ploughs, barbed wire – and endless varieties of wheat.

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# It's a shore thing

Summer or winter, life is always divine on the edge of Lake Trasimeno, writes Kate Mikhail

It was as if Michelangelo's God from the Sistine Chapel had deserted the heavens for a day to join us mortals in a spot of sunbathing as an impressive, hirsute figure of a man strode purposefully across the beach in a fetching pair of skimpy, navy-blue swimming trunks. I sat mesmerised as this bearded apparition marched towards me – and then around me and off in the direction of the Sualzo Beach Funky Bar. Very appropriate, I thought.

I was at a tiny Umbrian beach on the northern edge of lake Trasimeno, in Passignano, a vast expanse of water with three large islands and surrounded by low, rolling hills covered with olive groves and vineyards. Everyone and their mother, it seems, has their own olive and grape crop, down to one elderly couple I saw with just a handful of trees and vines in their front garden.

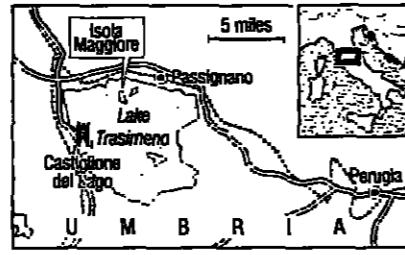
For those with lots of energy to burn, there are surfboards, pedal boats and sailing boats for hire – or you can throw yourself around playing volleyball or basketball. Personally, I opted for loafing around under a weeping willow, with gentle strolls in search of the local sights. But this is not one of those beach resorts that is just worth visiting in the summer. In the winter, the air is clear and crisp, the sun warm and the views and walks as scenic as ever, with the added plus of being virtually tourist free.

If you arrive by train, a £1.40 ride from nearby Perugia, don't be put off by the deserted ghost town of a station. Just a short walk from here you'll find yourself in the centre of Passignano, home to a tiny ferry port that runs a regular service to Trasimeno's islands.

Here, you can sit outdoors, on the lake's edge, and pose with the best of them. There are a number of colourful bar-style kiosks where the food is fresh and cheap, and chrome jukeboxes dotted around in their own made-to-measure, weather-proof shelters act as magnets to the local designer-clad youths. This is clearly the place where everyone comes to pass the time of day.



Veiled vales: the rolling Umbrian countryside beside Lake Trasimeno



and, to mingle effectively with the Italians, it soon became obvious that dark shades are a must, all year round.

The old centre of Passignano is on a small hill directly above the ferry port and is filled with picturesque dolls' houses and impossibly narrow streets. The view from

the top is spectacular and well worth the uphill climb, although a strange collection of somewhat rosy artworks in the hilltop ruins were a surreal and confusing distraction.

If you spend any length of time in Italy, the chances are that you will start putting on the pounds, as life here is so food-oriented and the food so good. Sooner or later, exercise becomes the only option, which is why Passignano is perfect. There are several walks suggested by the local tourist board that show off the high number of churches and castles around the perimeter of the lake, the most impressive castle being the Castiglione del Lago on the west side of lake Trasimeno; but head off in almost any direction and you will not be disappointed.

I had been tucking into the local chocolate delicacy, *Baci*, which can be bought individually from just about anywhere, and felt that a healthy walk was long overdue.

Apart from being dangerously morish, *Baci* carry folded up "messages of love" which have the same gimmicky attraction as the bad jokes you get in Christmas crackers.

"When I saw you I fell in love and you smiled because you knew," read one, and another: "Where the eyes willingly fall so does the heart and eventually the feet." I was beginning to see why Italian men have a reputation for being such romantics.

On the other hand, who could fail to be poetically inclined in such surround-

ings? Whatever you do, when you visit Trasimeno, make sure you take the boat to Isola Maggiore, said to have been visited by St Francis of Assisi in 1211. The trip takes about 30 minutes, costs £8.00 lire (£3) return, and is beautifully relaxing. And it is only once you are afloat that you will really appreciate the sheer size of this lake.

The island itself is magical. It is a car-free zone, a great luxury, and has a great walk around its shore path and up to the top to the church of San Archangelo with its 14th-15th century frescos. Isola Maggiore is quite a tourist attraction in the summer but in the winter and spring it is fairly deserted, and walking into

## AVANTI, AVANTI

### Getting there

New, low-cost flights to Italy on no-frills airlines make the country much easier and cheaper to reach this summer than before. Go (0845 60 5432) is launching to Rome and Milan on 22 and 23 May respectively, and promises to sell all seats at £100 all summer.

### Getting Information

Italian State Tourist Office, 1 Princes Street, London W1R 8AY (071-408 6254; brochure request line 0891 600280).

### Getting wet

"Days of heavy rain have resulted in serious flooding and landslides in the southern part of the region of Campania. A state of emergency has been declared. The mountainous area on the borders between the provinces of Salerno and Avellino, where several towns have been hit by mudslides, is worst affected. Other towns which have been badly affected are Stano, Bradigliano, Sarno and Quindici (the latter having been completely engulfed by mud). Visitors are strongly advised against travel to these areas. There have also been minor landslides in other areas, such as the holiday resort of Amalfi, where damage has been assessed as minimal" – Foreign Office advice, issued on 6 May.

the local bar felt like barging into someone's private living room. A group of friends were sprawled around, nattering and watching TV, although they did eventually clear a space. Food was not on offer, so if you're going to make a day of it out of season, it may be an idea to pack a picnic.

Later, dining al fresco, high in the hills above the lake in the forecourt of an Italian villa with the dark, gnarly silhouettes of an olive grove just below and the endless stretch of the lake below that, I could understand the pride of the locals and why my host rather harshly rubbished any other nearby town mentioned as "just a dump". Passignano certainly felt out of this world – a resort fit for gods.

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Taking a bow: Venice is serviced by a network of 150 canals and more than 400 bridges

Photograph: Emma Boam

**A plane**  
One certainty and two outsiders: that's the look of three new flights from Stansted which began on Thursday. As mentioned above, Ryanair (0541 569569) has started services from the Essex airport to Venice for £129 return. More adventurous, the airline is also starting up to Kristiansand in Sweden - close-ish to Malmo, fare £109 return - and St Etienne, near Lyon, for £119. Next month, Ryanair begins flights to two more Italian destinations - Rimini and Pisa - plus Carcassonne in south-west France.

**A train**  
Reims and Rouen are now less than £100 away from Waterloo International station in London. Destinations in eastern and northern France, notably Alsace and Normandy, have been added to the "Eurostar Plus" scheme. Caen and Le Havre are also available for £99 return; Strasbourg, Mulhouse, Nancy and Deauville cost £109. To qualify for these fares, you should book at least a week in advance and include a Saturday night away. Eurostar (0345 303030); Rail Europe (0990 848848).

**A boat**  
The main pavilion of Expo '98, which begins in Lisbon on 21 May, is the Oceanarium - a giant aquarium designed to look like an imaginary boat. The organisers of the event pointedly say: "A delegation was sent to Seville to understand and learn from the Spanish world exposi-

**CHECK IN**

tion, in order to avoid errors done there."

Portuguese tourist office: 0171-494 1853.

**A room**  
The most luxurious youth hostel in the world? The new Armagh hostel officially opened this month, close to both the Catholic and Church of Ireland cathedrals in the city. A twin room costs £21 per night, yet includes an en-suite bathroom, a television set and tea-making paraphernalia. Industrial-sized breakfasts cost an additional £2.75 per person. Bookings: 01861 511800.

**A meal**  
"Evening meals will be a minimum of four courses, accompanied by superior wine," promises First Choice (0990 557755) for its Fine Dining Chalets in the forthcoming winter's ski programme. A week at the Chalet Momosses in La Plagne costs from £429, including flights.

**A drink**  
Passengers on an American Airlines flight from Cali, Colombia to Miami almost got

a freshly brewed cup of liquid heroin, after 15lb of the drug were hidden in coffee packaging. A spokeswoman for American Airlines told *The Independent*: "We're working closely with US customs to investigate what happened. We spend a lot of money in trying to halt drug trafficking."

**A week from now...**  
...you could catch one of the most curious bus services trundling around Britain. The Explorer runs on a figure-of-eight route from London via Bath, Oxford, Stratford to York and Edinburgh, returning via the Lake District, Chester and Cambridge. It is a hop on/hop off service that costs £95, with no time limit. For bookings and information, call 0171-263 5435.

**A month from now...**  
...the Spitalfields Festival defiantly shrugs off competition from the World Cup with a performance of Faure's *Requiem* (the BBC is using another of the composer's works for its coverage of the soccer in France). For details of the events at the East London festival, call 0171-377 1362.

**A year from now...**  
...you'll be able to take off from Gatwick or Manchester on a two-centre holiday to Greece and Turkey. The first departure on the Virgin Holidays (01293 432100) combination is on 2 May 1999, and costs £384 staying a week in each of Marmaris in Turkey and the Greek island of Rhodes.

## 48 hours in Venice

You need a break - and a shortcut to the soul of Italy's most romantic city. Declan Pratt provides a prescription for the perfect, watery weekend trip

### Why go now?

Because this architectural feast of sumptuous churches and palaces is only two hours away, where you'll now get 2,884 lire for your pound. Yet you don't really need a reason to visit Venice - it's without a doubt the world's most romantic city.

### Beam down

From this week, Venice is more accessible with Ryanair (0541 569569) now flying from Stansted for £129 return. Expect retaliation from British Airways (0345 222111) and Alitalia (0171-602 7111), which fly from Heathrow and Gatwick respectively.

### Get your bearings

The appropriately named Marco Polo Airport is on the mainland, around eight miles from the city. ACTV Bus 5 makes the 30-minute journey across the causeway that connects Venice to the rest of Italy. To arrive in more style take a *moscovo* (regular motorboat) to San Marco for around £6. A water taxi will set you back £30. Venice is a good definition of the word "unique": 118 islands caught in a web of 150 canals and more than 400 bridges. The heart, metaphorically if not geographically, is the piazza San Marco.

### Check in

If you want luxury, Venice has no shortage of choice: the Bauer-Grünwald, Cipriani, Des Bains, Excelsior and Gritti Palace could grace any list of the world's finest hotels. But for James Bond there was only one choice: "The Danieli, of course". In this magnificent Gothic palace (0039 41 522 6480) on the lagoon front, the price for a double *en-suite* room ranges from £160 to £320 - breakfast is extra. For something a little more down-to-earth the Three Star Hotel Firenze (0039 41 522 2858) might be more suitable. Prices start at £50 for a double *en-suite* (with breakfast), just yards from the action in San Marco. Some of Venice's many hotels claim not to reduce their rack rates, yet both the Firenze and the Danieli itself make substantial reductions, so do persevere.

### Take a ride

Gondolas may be the classic symbol of romantic Venice but they're not cheap - they cost more than £30 an hour. On the other hand, the city's public transport, the vaporetto, are both inexpensive and fun. A trip along the Grand Canal, from Santa Lucia Station to San Marco, is a great introduction to Venice for just £150. Vaporetto No 1 zigzags up the canal, affording a clear view of the stunning buildings massed along it. The extraordinary architectural parade includes Venetian Baroque, Byzantine, classical, Gothic and late-Gothic styles. The Grand Canal is spanned by just three bridges, including the shop-lined Rialto, one of the city's most enduring symbols. The design reflects the 16th-century Venetian desire to demonstrate to the world its opulence and technical skill. A 24-hour vaporetto ticket costs around £5, a three-day ticket £10.

### Take a hike

"A piedi" really is the way to discover a city which, by nature, demands a reasonable amount of legwork. The main tourist thoroughfare between the station and San Marco is well trodden, but duck down a side-alley into the back-streets and you'll soon find yourself in the "other" Venice. Parts of the city are empty of tourists even in high season and you can be lost for hours in the narrow, winding lanes, stumbling across seemingly forgotten churches squeezed into tiny squares, then stepping out blinking on to the broad sweep of the lagoon.

### Lunch on the run

Try a *tramezzo*, one of Venice's fast food sandwich triangles, which

come crammed with every imaginable filling. They are served with lunch-time drinks in bars all over the city, for around £1.50, to eat standing up.

### Cultural afternoon

Devote your afternoon to piazza San Marco, one of the world's most magnificent squares, dominated by St Mark's basilica and the Palazzo Ducale, buildings of superb quality and importance. The Basilica di San Marco with its colourfully chaotic facade is unique, having been built to house the remains of Saint Mark, stolen from Alexandria in 828AD. The exterior was continually added to over the centuries, the famous horses (now replicas) having been plundered from Constantinople in 1204. The interior of this grand cathedral is opulent in the extreme, with 4,000 square metres of mosaics adorning its walls.

### Window shopping

Venice offers some great souvenirs amongst the usual tourist tat, including carnival masks and artwork. The streets of Merceria and Fossetta, close to San Marco, have a wide selection, but prices can be comparatively high. If you're especially keen on Venetian glass or lace, take the vaporetto out to the islands of Murano and Burano, the glass and lace centres respectively, where choice, quality and price are all superior.

### An aperitif

Admire piazza San Marco from one of its many bars and cafés, such as Caffè Florian at No 56/59, Italy's oldest coffee house - expensive, but in terms of ambience you get what you pay for.

### Demure dinner

Considering the good reputation of Italian cuisine, Venice is a disappointment. As a general rule, the farther you go from the San Marco or station tourist trap, the lower the prices and often the better the quality. So search out one of the many small trattorie tucked away in the side streets and squares. Meals à la carte are expensive: the *menu turistico* is often worth trying.

Venetian cooking is relatively plain and features plenty of seafood. Risotto is perhaps the Venetian dish.

### Sunday morning: go to church

Venice contains almost inexhaustible examples of religious architecture, yet the perfectly balanced proportions of the church of San Giorgio Maggiore stand out. Built in 1563, the church's white, temple-like facade provides a perfect antidote to the colourful grandeur of the basilica. The campanile, though not as tall as its San Marco rival, provides the best possible panorama over the city and lagoon.

### Bracing brunch

Join the locals in one of Venice's *osterie*, modest bars serving wines by the glass, and *cicchetti* - bites such as deep-fried vegetables, stuffed olives and pâté.

### A walk in the park

In a city so truly limited for room, open spaces are predictably few and far between. To escape the city's claustrophobia, take the vaporetto to Sant' Elena or walk along the front from San Marco to the quiet eastern districts and their parks. The spectacular views take in the Palazzo Ducale, San Giorgio Maggiore, and many of the lagoon's islands.

### The icing on the cake

Italian ice-cream is justly renowned. Pick one up while strolling the streets, or warm up in one of the many parlours.

### THE EDINBURGH RESIDENCE

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# In the wild at Woburn

The opening of Disney's Animal Kingdom in Florida may put Britain's safari parks in the shade. But, for Sarah Jewell and young friends, Bedfordshire still has some bite

Woburn Safari Park, set in the lush, green parkland of Woburn Abbey, was created by the Duke of Bedford in 1970 and has an impressive collection of dangerous and exotic animals. Lions, tigers, bears, wolves, rhinos and elephants roam around the grounds, originally landscaped by Humphrey Repton in the early 19th century.

There have been animals at Woburn (pronounced "Wooburn" by its nits and "Wobburn" by the rest of us) since 1811 when the sixth Duke established a menagerie of birds, antelopes and llamas. Giant woolly llamas still live in the park but the animals that cause the most excitement are undoubtedly the big cats that prowl alongside the cars. The only place where it is safe to walk about without fear of being gobbled up is the leisure area. Here children can let off steam in the adventure playgrounds or brush up their animal knowledge in the wild watch computer room, and there are lots more animals to see, including the squirrel monkeys in their newly-opened walk-through enclosure.

**The visitors:** Sarah Jewell took Tim Swan, a barrister, and his seven-year-old twin sons, Nat and Joe.

**Sarah:** Having lived in Africa as a child and visited game reserves with my father, a zoologist specialising in African wildlife, I was intrigued to find out what a British safari park would be like. I was delighted to see that although there is not the thrill of tracking the animals down (they are all on full view in the open countryside), it is still exciting to watch these beautiful animals wandering about uncaged. The sense of freedom is illusory but the huge, prehistoric-

shaped rhinos grazing quietly on the green grass seemed boviney contented and the pride of lions nesting against the hillside, with the wind blowing through their manes, looked proud and sleepy.

The African big game were untroubled by the huge *Jurassic Park*-style security gates that keep them fenced in, but the Bengal tigers didn't seem so happy. Naturally solitary animals, there are eight of them pacing about - the result of an overtly successful breeding programme during the time when the park was managed by the Chipperfields (of circus fame); and the plan is to reduce their numbers in the course of time, to a single pair. The wizened-faced Rhesus monkeys, by contrast, are emboldened by living in a big social group and they delight in playing gang warfare over the cars, jumping up on to the windscreens and pounding the roofs to howls of excitement from the human apes inside.

Chris Webster, chief executive of Woburn, says he wants to create as many "wow" moments as possible, and as we drove through the park the car was echoing to the word. For me, the real "wow" moment was seeing a huge black bear hug its round body around the base of a sheer pine tree and then haul its way up with extraordinary agility. I was amazed that such a heavy animal could be so graceful and it was thrilling to see this native of the forests of North America looking so relaxed in a rainy English safari park.

We couldn't resist driving around the safari circuit once more. On this trip a huge, perfect rainbow suddenly appeared in the sky over the aptly named Rainbow Landing aviary. It was the concluding "wow" moment to a delightful day.



Cat's whiskers: tigers and lions are Woburn's chief attractions as they roam around the cars  
Photograph: Philip Meech

parrots with nectar from a little pot. I would recommend visiting Woburn to absolutely anyone.

**Joe:** I liked driving around the safari circuits, and the way all the monkeys jumped on the car. And I liked seeing the bears up the trees, and the lions and tigers. The wolves looked like Alsatians but they don't run like Alsatians they trot. The rhinos were so big and strong but best of all I liked the hippo; it looked like a water pig but it was much bigger than a pig. The safari beats London Zoo because at the zoo you can't see the animals properly, as you have to look through bars. I would recommend it for anyone over three.

**The deal:** Woburn Safari Park, Woburn Park, Woburn (01525 290407) open daily 10am-5pm, adults £10.50, children £7, family ticket concessions available.

**How to get there:** exit at Junction 13 of the M1. The park is clearly signposted from there.

**Facilities:** daily programme of animal talks and demonstrations; adventure playgrounds; Treetop action trail; Badger Valley play area for under fives; Jungles gift shop; Safari restaurant.

**Other safari parks:** West Midland Safari and Leisure Park, Spring Grove, Bewdley (01299 402114); Whipsnade Wild Animal Park, Dunstable (0990 200123); Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, Port Lympne, Lympne, (01303 264647); Knowsley Safari Park, Prescot, Merseyside (0151 439009); Longleat Estate, Warminster (01985 844400).

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The north Norfolk coast offers varied views, rare bird life – and an English stately home. **Emma Haughton** takes a walk

This four-mile walk around Holkham, in north Norfolk, offers impressive contrasts in scenery. At one moment you'll be strolling along some of the wildest and most beautiful stretches of beach in the land, then, just minutes later, you'll find yourself walking through the genteel, landscaped grounds of one of England's most impressive stately homes.

Kicking off from the Victoria hotel in the centre of Holkham village, cross over the A149 into Lady Ann's Road, a tree-lined avenue leading past cattle and beet fields directly to the sea.

At the end of the road, turn left on to the earth track through the pines; you're now in the thick of Holkham National Nature Reserve, which covers nearly 4,000 hectares of Norfolk coast between Burnham Norton and Blakeney. The sandy beaches, inter-tidal mudflats and pine woodland that make up the reserve are a haven for a large variety of birds, many with romantic-sounding names such as redshank, bearded reedling, water rail, shelduck and

pied flycatcher.

Once you have passed a small lake on your left, take a sharp right up the steep bank of sand dunes and head down towards the sea. Keep your eyes peeled, and you may even see the rare natterjack toad – distinguished by the light yellow stripe down its back – which lives on the dunes and lays its spawn in the nearby shallow pools.

Bear left as you walk along the foreshore. In rough weather Holkham beach has an invigorating, elemental wildness that is guaranteed to blow the cobwebs from your soul; on fine days it transforms itself into the archetypal English beach, with yachts sailing in the bay, paddling children, and endless yellow sand encrusted with sea shells of every size and shape. At low tide the waves

dawdle along in lazy ripples, and the water remains so shallow that you can paddle for miles before it even reaches your knees.

reaches your knees.

Following the line of pines on your left, keep on past the first headland. As you turn the corner, brace yourself for the naturist section, but don't get too excited - just as things get interesting, you cut sharp left into the dunes back towards the pine forest, along the path where a sign politely requests nudists to keep to the beach. The sandy track takes you through the eerie gloom of pine



## **Lost in the Wash: riders on the beach at Holkham, Norfolk**

Photograph: John Voos

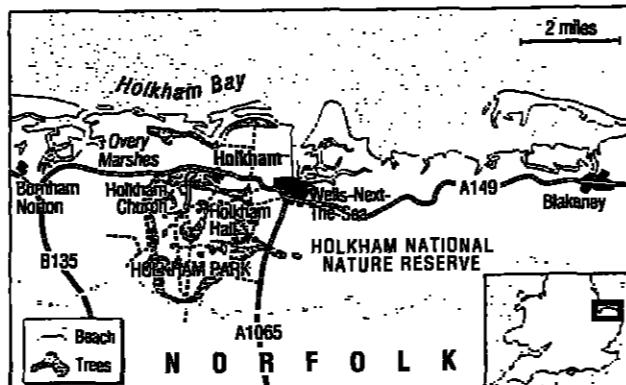
Coke monument, an elaborate, 120-ft tribute to Thomas Coke, who inherited the estate in 1776 and was regarded as virtually the patron saint of Norfolk farming. The monument was erected by public subscription: the life-size sculptures of a plough, a sheep, an ox and a seed drill that surround the central column (topped by bulls, leaves and turnips) refer to the revolutionary agricultural reforms Coke introduced in the early 19th century.

From the monument, head straight across the deer and sheep pastures to Holkham Hall, spread before you in all its magisterial splendour. If you've got the time and the energy, you can take a tour inside and round it off with a meal or a snack in the adjacent tea rooms; if you haven't, content yourself with the magnificent Palladian exterior of this historic 18th-century building, home to seven generations of the Earls of Leicester.

When you've had your fill of all this stateliness, bear north towards the Almshouses Gate. Once over the cattle grid, take the left fork and head towards the trees. From the almshouses it's a short, straight walk down through the model village of Holkham, and back to the Victoria Hotel. If you're peckish, try its wide selection of sandwiches, ploughmen's lunches and hot meals, which you can wash down with a pint of Adnam's beer or Addlestone's cider.

*Map: Ordnance Survey Pathfinder 819  
TF 84/94 (Wells-next-the-Sea and  
Burnham Market)*

# Wild geese and philanthropy



woods, home to countless grey squirrels that strip the cones and leave their remains on the forest floor.

When you come to a crossroads, keep heading south along the footpath past the bird hide on your left. As you curve round into Bone's Drove, look just above the tree line and you'll see the tower of Holkham church and the tip of the Coke monument in Holkham Park, looking, from this distance, uncannily like a pineapple balanced atop an Apollo rocket.

you'll pass through Overy Marshes, in winter an important refuge for wildfowl such as pink-footed geese, brent geese and wigeon.

brent geese and wigeon. When you reach the A149 again, cross over and enter Holkham Park through the wrought-iron gates of Church Lodge. Turn almost immediately left through the mature oaks and chestnuts of Church Wood, skirt the tip of the large green lake on your right and head on into Staite Wood. When you hit a junction, turn sharp right and you'll

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# Nature's way with animals

How do you apply homeopathic remedies to a cow with toothache? Or a gerbil that's off its nuts? Sally Williams meets a vet with a mission

People say unpleasant things about the country vet Chris Day: that he is a witch doctor, a bone shaker, a crank. They pick fights with him in veterinary journals. Some even demand that he resign from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

But then Chris Day - mid-fifties, grey, boyishly floppy hair, tweed jacket, comy cords and peculiar, Muttley-style laugh - is a homeopathic vet. Domestic cats, dogs, gerbils; farm cows, horses, pigs; even zoo elephants, rhinos and wild animals found sick or injured are all treated from his Alternative Veterinary Medicine Centre in Oxfordshire. "There is no animal," he says defiantly, "that can't be treated with alternative medicine."

But how exactly? There's more to homeopathic medicine than little pills with long names (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*, *Gelsemium sempervirens*); it's about getting to know the whole person as an individual - assessing personality, behaviour, job satisfaction, fingerprints. How on earth do you return mind, body and spirit to a balanced state when your patient refuses to be examined (Chris never knocks them out with tranquillisers), let alone discuss its social background and psychological state?

"No, you can't ask the animal questions," agrees Chris, "or even discuss what sort of pain it's in. Does it ache or throb, or is it a shooting pain? But animals have a brain. They feel things. They have emotions." They also get eaten for dinner, but Chris doesn't see this as a reason not to treat them as "energetic wholes" before doing so. "We have a duty to animals, especially if we are exploiting them."

Can you tell whether a dog is happy or sad? "Of course," he replies. "A wet nose,

a waggy tail and a nice shiny coat make a picture of health. So anything short of that starts to become important." But isn't that a healthy dog, rather than a happy one? "Happiness and health are integrated. Mind and body are integrated. That's the fundamental thing." What about cows? "One is happy to chew the cud; another will try to break out. Same situation, different animal. I wouldn't treat mastitis in one the way I would in the other."

Hedgehogs, then? "Wild animals are more of a challenge, but just because you don't know how a hedgehog feels, doesn't mean you can't observe its behaviour and reactions."

A conventional consultation lasts around five minutes. Chris's run to three-quarters of an hour, and that's after Caroline, his PA, has booked them in. It's not just a case of name and address. "You get the whole spiel," she explains. "A blow-by-blow account of the animal's history, like it or not."

Chris spends two days in the surgery and three on the road. He treats referrals only, and as most clients live some distance away, Chris will see them once and then deal with them by phone or letter. Animals are treated with the same homeopathic medicine as humans. Likewise acupuncture treatment, which is used on domestic animals - dogs, cats, horses, even goats and cattle. "Acupuncture treats the animal as an energetic whole," Chris comments.

So how does he set about assessing his patients? Take Smoky the cat, a former stray who has the feline form of Aids. The traditional vet advises that he should be put down. Chris has other thoughts. "Does Smoky like to be warm or cool?" he asks.

"Warm. He spends his whole time near the radiator," says his owner, Charlotte. "Good appetite?" "I'll say. Just look at him." "Stool or waterworks?" "Haven't a clue. He does it outside." "Does he have any fears?" "He jumps when I make a bang or move suddenly." "What sort of bowl does he drink from?" "Best Wedgwood china, of course." Charlotte knows that plastic bowls are full of nasty toxins. "What do you feed him?" "Felix and fresh fish." Whoops! Fish from the North Sea, the Irish Sea, the Mediterranean and fish farms are subject to worrying levels of toxins. Farmed fish suffer the additional disadvantage of being stressed. And really, Chris reminds her, what about the recommended organic chicken regime? But she's tried that. The cat didn't like it. And it's expensive.

Chris, of course, would never be so half-hearted. He is a total believer in 100 per cent

Soil Association-approved feeding, and utterly convinced that he is always right. He lives and works with uninterrupted energy from home, a beautiful Norman barn with Queen Anne extensions, grows medicinal herbs in his walled organic vegetable garden, from which he steams carrots and finely grates herbs for his dog (or so he says in his snappily entitled booklet, *Feeding Dogs the Natural Way*) and is so convinced of the evils of conventional medicine that he even refuses to give his baby daughter "immune-system-disturbing" inoculations.

And one little inconsistency that did not quite compute - eating meat - has now been sorted out. Not that Chris had a problem with eating meat as such. "It's part of life." It's just that one day he could pull the trigger. He used to kill the beast himself, you see, rather than buying it pre-packed from Tesco. And then one day he couldn't. Nor

could his wife, and he wasn't going to pay someone else to do it, if he couldn't. So now he feels much more comfortable with himself. "You have to be consistent," he explains, "otherwise there is a stress."

Or rather, more stress. Making money the natural way is not easy. It costs Chris £700 a day to run the surgery (car, six staff) and, as Caroline points out, "we do not sell products, as conventional vets do. The cost of medicine is nothing. It's the time. And people are never keen to pay for time."

But enough of them do. Chris first set up the practice in 1987 and regularly starts at 4am to catch up on cases. Both his parents were vets and Chris decided, aged five, that he wanted to be one too. He was introduced to homeopathy in his teens by relations who were homeopathic doctors. He trained as a conventional vet (as all homeopathic vets have to) joined his

parents' practice in 1973 and started using homeopathy. It all "snowballed" from there.

He is now secretary of the British Association of Homeopathic Veterinary Surgeons - core qualified membership 19 (and one of those works in South Africa). There are 250 qualified homeopathic doctors. But this could change. There is talk of introducing accredited courses at Bristol University and Glasgow University.

In the meantime there is just one course in Oxford, and the students who will graduate this summer. If they pass a further exam, the numbers of qualified homeopathic vets, Caroline predicts, could be up by at least two.

Alternative Veterinary Medicine Centre, Stamford-in-the-Vale, Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 8NQ (01367-710475)



Photograph: John Lawrence

## A sting in the tale of the crayfish

When thousands of crayfish were found dead in the river Avon, sheep dip was immediately suspected. By Duff Hart-Davis



Under threat: the English crayfish

Early on the morning of Thursday, 17 April, Alan Jones went down, as he always does, to inspect the river Avon where it runs past his cottage in the village of Pinkney, Gloucestershire. To his consternation, he saw that the bottom of the stream was covered with dead and dying crayfish; many were upside down, and those still the right way up were barely moving.

Alan - a carpenter and lecturer in construction techniques - has lived there, and fancied the crayfish, for most of his life. Indeed, when he was a boy his family frequently ate them; but since they became a protected species he has been an observer only. It was immediately clear to him that some ecological disaster had taken place, for until then the Sherston Avon had been one of the few remaining habitats in which native crayfish

survive. He therefore rang the Environment Agency's emergency line, and within 15 minutes an expert arrived.

At first biologists feared that the mortality was due to the plague imported by American crayfish early in the Eighties - a fungal disease, carried by spores, against which the English species has no resistance. So deadly is it that when it got into the Hampshire Avon it killed the entire population - millions - in the space of two weeks.

Plague, however, was ruled out by analysis of bodies recovered from the river near

Sherston, which showed that the killer agent had been the insecticide cypermethrin, used in sheep dips and sprays. Today, nearly a month after the incident, the hunt is still on for the source of the poison, which has wiped out not only the crayfish but also most other invertebrates along at least three miles of the waterway.

Initial suspicion fell on recently-dipped sheep upstream at Badminton, where drainage ditches - known as winter-born streams - wind through lush watermeadows and run into

the river. The chemicals used in dips are so toxic that even if a sheep merely strays, or falls into the water, it can wipe out all invertebrate life for 100 yards or more. In the past few days, however, the agency's investigating officers have been concentrating on other possibilities.

Compared with the catastrophe of the burst dam in the Coto Donana, this is a disaster in miniature. Nevertheless, it is intensely disappointing for British conservationists, because an enormous effort has gone into preserving the integrity

of the Sherston Avon, and several batches of healthy crayfish have been taken from there to restock less fortunate stretches of the river.

Not that all the work has pleased local people; many have objected to the fences recently built along the river to preserve the banks and keep farm animals out of the stream. Wooden posts and barbed wire, they say, spoil the appearance of the gentle valley. Perhaps they do - but they also prevent

encroachment by cattle, reduce erosion and improve the habitat for many river creatures, not least crayfish and water voles. Feelings about the fences run so high that hints have been dropped about possible sabotage; could someone have deliberately dumped

something in the river to set the scene with the agency?

That seems pretty far-fetched. Yet certain it is that the people who began bringing crayfish from America have a lot to answer for, because the imports produced a classic illustration of the folly of introducing alien species into an environment that lacks the controls and balances to keep them in check. Like the grey squirrel, the mink and the rainbow trout, the American signal crayfish is by no means a welcome immigrant. Being

larger than our own, more aggressive, and omnivorous, it has spread relentlessly through our river systems, eradicating the natives by eating them, driving them off their own territory, and giving them a fatal disease.

At one stage signals were widely advertised as a fine commercial proposition. Anyone who owned a pond was invited to farm them: seed the pond with nippers, you were told, and in a couple of years, at no further cost, you could haul out lobsters. What nobody realised was that signals are amphibious; on wet nights they take to the fields and crawl overland into streams. So they invaded our rivers, with disastrous effect.

Some of them are resistant

to the plague, and may survive indefinitely. Why, then, should they not eventually replace our native stocks? "Because our freshwater fauna have evolved over thousands of years, since the last ice age, to live in harmony with each other," says Dr Nick Giles, a freshwater fisheries consultant. "Nobody knows whether, in the long run, signals will fit in." As a black mark against them he cites their habit of clipping off weed near the bed of the stream - something English crayfish do not - and so clearing whole patches of habitat.

No one is yet sure what the long-term effects of the pollution at Sherston may be.

Alan Jones noticed that the brown trout, which he feeds every morning, showed no interest in his offerings for the next three days. Then they appeared to recover their appetites - but what is going to happen to their offspring? The insecticide also wiped out mayfly larvae: Martin Frayling, the agency officer first on the scene, saw "hundreds of thousands of them dead on the river bed". The main food supply for trout fry and other small fish has gone.

Whatever the outcome, all river managers remain acutely aware that farmers are regularly using substances so poisonous that even extremely low concentrations are lethal.

## What, when, where ...

The airwaves will be buzzing on 10 May, which is National Mills Day. On Sunday, the Furness amateur radio society will operate a special CB radio event from its headquarters in Gleaston Mill, an 18th-century water mill whose origins were in the Middle Ages.

There are about 400 wind and water mills open to the public in the UK, more than 60 of which are in working order. The special event radio station (call sign GB2GVW) will make links with 80 to 90 mills both here and abroad.

Last year mills from The Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland and South Africa

took part. If you're not a CB fan, you can watch the Furness clog dancers, and take in a converted cowshed, and view an archaeological dig (Mesolithic), as well as examining the clasp-arm pit wheel, the largest in the country, as you watch Gleaston Mill in action.

Gleaston Water Mill, Gleaston, near Ulverston, Cumbria (0129 869244, <http://www/watervmill.co.uk>), is open 10am-5pm, admission to mill £1.50 (accompanied children free on Mills Day).

Sally Kindberg

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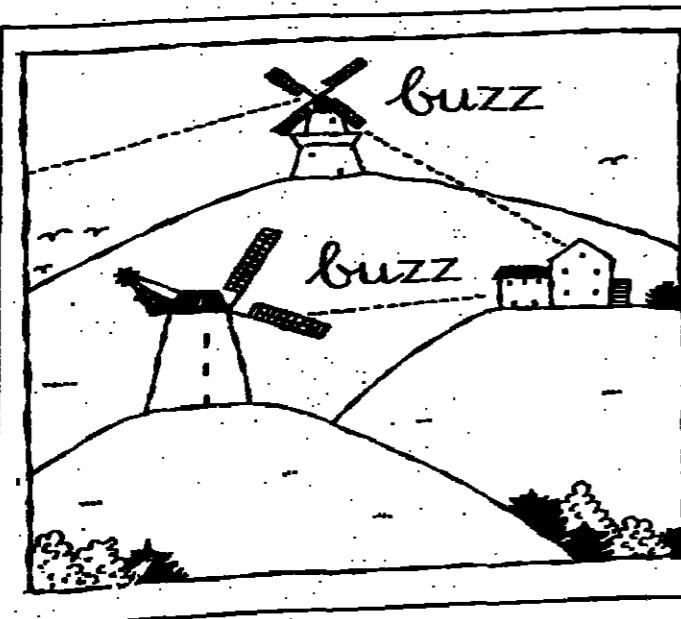
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# From pot pourri to pot roast

A taste of ... lavender  
from Norfolk, by  
Nikki Spencer

Lavender may be strongly associated with scenting clothes, but in fact it has also been used in cooking for hundreds of years – and is currently undergoing something of a revival. More and more chefs are using the pungent flower to flavour fish, lamb, sorbet and other foods, and this summer the New Covent Garden Soup Company is producing Potato, Leek and Lavender Soup for sale in grocery shops and supermarkets all over the country.

East Anglia is particularly suited to growing lavender because of its dry, light and sandy soil, according to Henry Head, managing director of the UK's largest commercial grower, Norfolk Lavender – although after the heavy rain last month he says that now he's not so sure. Dry weather from now until the end of July is the key to a good harvest. "I'd be very happy to see another drop of rain," he says.

The family firm started growing lavender back in 1932, extracting oil for use in perfumery and drying flowers for pot pourri and

– more recently – for culinary purposes. The tea room at the company's headquarters at Caley Mill in Heacham sells lavender scones, lavender tea and lavender ice-cream, as well as jars of lavender marmalade.

Up on the coast at Wells-next-the-Sea, a passionate advocate of lavender in cooking is Carla Phillips, who runs The Moorings restaurant with her husband Bernard.

"Anything you can use rosemary for is pretty good with lavender, only it has more strength and vigour," enthuses Carla. She puts dried lavender (or fresh, when it's available) into salt water to flavour steamed fish, and uses it as a marinade with lemon and garlic on loin of lamb. She also makes an aromatic oil with lavender, steeping a sprig in oil with garlic and salt and pepper, to use a few weeks later on salads, or with mashed potato.

However, Carla warns against getting carried away with the idea of lavender as an ingredient. "Lavender is quite powerful and I

believe it works best when it is used subtly in savoury recipes. I think a sweet lavender sauce, for example, would be foul."

#### Lavender trails

• Norfolk Lavender, Caley Mill, Heacham (01485 570384) is open to the public, admission free, daily except Christmas Day. From mid-June to August you can see more than 100 acres of lavender in bloom by joining minibus tours of the fields (cost £3.95). From mid-July you can also see the distilling process, whereby the lavender is made into oil. As well as the tea rooms, the 19th-century mill has a garden centre and a shop that sells dried lavender flowers for cooking. The company also runs a mail-order service (01507 466466).

• The Moorings, 6 Freeman Street, Wells-next-the-Sea (01328 710949) is open from Thursday to Monday. Owner and chef Carla Phillips has written a book in conjunction with Norfolk Lavender entitled *Herbs from a Norfolk*

Kitchen – available for £3 plus 85p p&p from Norfolk Lavender.

• Two other Norfolk restaurants that use lavender regularly are Cougham Hall Hotel, Grimston, King's Lynn (01485 600250), where the owner, Christine Forecast, grows more than 30 different varieties of lavender in her herb garden (open to the public daily 2pm-4pm, free); and Roccoco, 11 Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn (01553 771483) where lavender and gin ice-cream is usually on the menu.

• The New Covent Garden Soup Company's Potato, Leek and Lavender Soup, made with fresh lavender flowers, will be available from 27 July to 9 August, price £1.49 for a carton.

*Nectar of the Aztecs: in our article on chocolate, published on 4 April, we mentioned the Musée du Cacao et du Chocolat. Please note that the exhibition building – at 13 Grand Place, B 1000 Brussels – is currently undergoing refurbishment and is not open to the public until 1 July.*



Purple haze: the tradition of using lavender as a flavouring is being revived

Photograph: Brian Harris

# Flowers good enough to eat

The stuff of ... cakes. Sally Staples discovers the delicate art of sugar craft

Here is a shop that will solve the dilemma of whether to buy a wedding cake or learn to make one. Corteil and Barratt, specialists in the delicate art of sugar craft, offer both custom-made cakes and classes in how to decorate them yourself.

Jane Whichello and her husband Ron began their business 14 years ago. On display in a conservatory behind the shop – where classes are held – is a cabinet containing examples of sugar flowers that might pass muster if exhibited at Kew Gardens lilies, roses, gardenias, gloveries, orchids, petunias. Every detail is there, from yellow-gold statemens at the centre of each flower, to the delicate twigs and leaves.

The demand is growing for sugar flowers, and if you have a mind to try them yourself, Jane says she can teach a pupil in a single day.

In the shop, every cake-perfecting gadget is available to buy. The Whichellos are the sole importers to the UK of special occasions. Classes for beginners cost from £20.

Corteil and Barratt, 40 High Street, Ewell, Surrey KT17 1RW (0181-393 0032). Open Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri 9am-5pm, Wed 9am-1pm, Sat 9am-4pm



Photograph: John Lawrence

## GAMES

### CROSSWORD PUZZLERS OUT FOR A DUCK: DON MANLEY EXPLAINS HIMSELF

Some of you reading this article will have been guided across from the crossword puzzle in this week's *Isrn*. Some, I have no doubt, will be angry, some sad, and some perhaps even amused. Others may have hit this piece *purely by chance*.

The fact is that I have achieved – if "achieved" is the right word – something quite unusual, and have been invited by my long-suffering crossword editor, Louise Levene, to give an account of myself. In puzzle 149, published on 18 April *Isrn*, I invited solvers to fill in some squares with clashing letters "to accord with the shape they make", adding that "a final mark should be added at an appropriate intersection of two grid lines". The shape (see *Isrn*) looked like a K knocked over. I assumed that readers would interpret it as a  $\pi$  (pi) and work out (perhaps following the hint in the puzzle's title "More or Less") the numerical differences between the clashing letters.

Thus, at the bottom of the pi the second I of IMAGINE in 26 down is three away from the second L of LILY at 41 across, so "3" is entered. Progressing up the leg of the pi, we get 3141, then 59... along the top and 7932 down the bottom leg. When you add the decimal point after the opening

digit, you get 3.141592... the value of  $\pi$ . Clever stuff! Obviously too clever for all eight or nine hundred entrants.

Looking back, I can see that the shape of the pi is a bit *inaccurate*, and perhaps in my day job as a maths editor I am used to seeing too many hand-written approximations to this transcendental wonder. But surely the shape wasn't *that* bad, and a few mathematicians would have seen what I was driving at? Alas, I miscalculated.

There has long been a tradition of providing impossible or near-impossible crosswords. Two *Listene* puzzles spring to mind: in one crossword by "Afril" in the Thirties or Forties, the publication expressed regret that none of its readers connected "Lombardy" and "Man of Words" with *The Cardinal's Snuff Box* at 28 across – a connection which some of us still fail to make; and about 20 years ago there was a puzzle entitled "Lip Service" by Leon, which involved playing a game of solitaire and spelling out the inscription on the Blarney Stone.

Afril was a master working out the rules of a new game; Leon was probably too clever for his own good. So where does that place Duck? I'm in the

Leon camp, though I suspect Leon knew what he was doing. I guess that, despite over 30 years of setting, I didn't. I am as dumbfounded by the zero correct entries as the hapless solvers who failed to recognise the malformed mathematical symbol. But my feelings to be honest, are mixed: I'm tempted to be excited at having fooled everyone, but reckon I should feel guilty at having spoiled everyone's fun.

Only two more things need to be said. One is that we need to explore the *new and strange* in crosswords to keep the game alive; the other is that no one should ever set out deliberately to produce a puzzle that will stump all the solvers. On that charge I plead innocent, so my apology to *Isrn* enthusiasts has some qualification. For most of the time, the setter must expect to be a gracious loser in a battle of wits in a contest that has a fair set of rules and conventions. That is how the battle is normally conducted in the *Isrn* puzzle, and indeed all the puzzles in *The Independent* and *Independent on Sunday*.

*Don Manley contributes as 'Duck' to 'Isrn'. His less-than-impossible puzzles appear weekly in the 'Independent on Sunday', in the guise of Quixote.*

### PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Lord Grade, 91, film maker, producer, the Grade Company

We used to have races at school. I was a good, fast runner, but I never made it a part of my career. At the time, I had no idea what I was going to do, and certainly didn't know that I'd finish up in the entertainment industry.

If I could play anything, I would have liked to be a good tennis player. I had a house with a tennis court one time, but I wasn't any good, so I knew that it wasn't a natural thing for me. When you play games, you have to feel at ease with them.

I've tried golf, but unfortunately I just could not hit the ball, so I thought, why drive myself crazy? There's no point in anyone trying to play a game that they don't take to naturally.

When I was 18 years old I discovered the sport of dancing, and became an exceptional Charleston dancer. To begin with, I was a ballroom dancer. I wasn't very good, and it was hard to get a partner. But

when I started to Charleston, the girls were lining up to dance with me.

I'd learned to do intricate steps, because my father – as you probably know – was born in Russia. He was a very good Cossack dancer, and when I became a dancing act – which I was for eight years before I became an agent – I incorporated a lot of those steps that they do as Cossack dances into my routines.

I am still the world Charleston champion. I won the competition at the Royal Albert Hall on 15 December 1926 and I learned only recently that one of the judges was Fred Astaire. If I'd known he was watching, I'd probably have failed with nerves.

*Grade Productions produced 'On Golden Pond' and 'Sophie's Choice'. Their latest film, 'Something to Believe In', was released in the UK yesterday by Warner Bros. Maria Pitillo and William McNamara star with Tom Conti, Maria Schneider and Ian Bannen.*

### CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

Of all the many changes that have taken place in the chess world over the past three decades – the schism in the world championship, the bad influence of rapid play events on the general quality of play, the pernicious effects of computer analysis, and the introduction of the ludicrous Bobby Fischer Chess Clock among them – the one I find most depressing is the extinction of cheap chess sets made of French boxwood at the hands of an even less expensive plastic variety.

I say this not through any particular aesthetic delight at the tactile qualities of wood or a dislike of plastic itself. It's just the shape of the wooden knights' ears that I miss. The disappearance of the boxwood sets, you see, has deprived me of one great claim to a place in chess history. For I was the first person ever, as far as I know, to pile an entire chess set on top of a single rook. And thanks to the despicable new plastic sets, that is an art that has totally died out.

You start with a rook (conventionally a white one, though black would, I suppose, be equally acceptable) placed normally on any square of a chessboard. The crenellations around its battlements provide the notches on which four pawns may be hung in a manner that allows the tops of the pawns to form the base for the next level.

Now comes the clever bit. Take two knights, two bishops and one rook. If you hang the knight muzzles over the rook's battlements, you will find they stay in place. And they become even more stable if you tuck a bishop in under each of their bellies. (Point the two bishops in opposite directions for general stability.) The entire rook-plus-four-minor-pieces combination may then be balanced upon the four pawns on the original rook. Not only were the boxwood sets perfectly weighted for this to work, but the ears of the knights, pointed *friskily upwards*, left a four-point horizontal base for the next level.

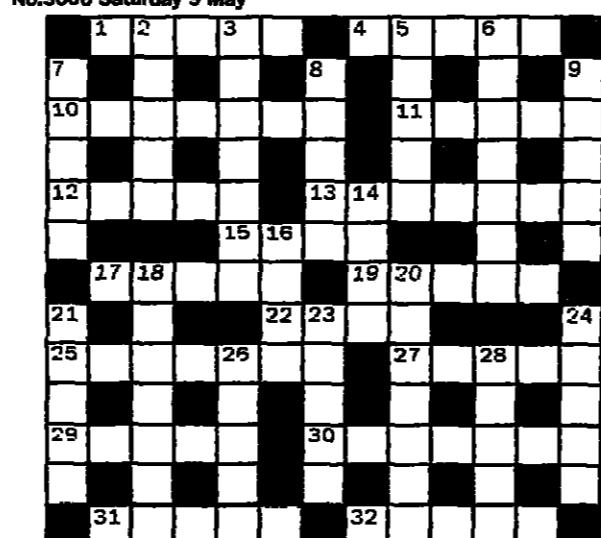
So another rook, two bishop and two knights are disposed of in similar manner, leaving us with two queens, two kings and 12 pawns. It's a little tricky, but you can get rid of two of the pawns between the ears of the knights. Delicately placed, they are light enough not to upset the balance, and their position becomes more stable when the next level is added.

Three pawns can be hung round each queen's head, again forming a level triangular base of pawn-tops for the next story. At the very top two kings may be suspended by their crosses on those very useful crenellations of the final rook. The last four pawns may be balanced on assorted bishops, with one or two even on the topmost rook between the kings.

The execution of this fine pile took me most of my fourth year at Cambridge. Then the sets went out of fashion and my hope for eternal fame vanished with them.

### CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3606 Saturday 9 May



#### ACROSS

- 1 He-goat (5)
- 4 Broadcasting (2,3)
- 10 Stir (7)
- 11 Inexpensive (5)
- 12 Correct (5)
- 13 Make a list of (7)
- 15 Solemn word (4)
- 17 Convulsive movement (5)
- 19 Call to mind (5)
- 22 Long, bushy hair (4)
- 25 Masculinity (7)
- 27 Heat unit (5)
- 29 Rough hut (5)
- 30 First (7)
- 31 Burglar's tool (5)
- 32 Gemstone (5)

#### DOWN

- 2 Cake topping (5)
- 3 Outbuildings (4-3)
- 5 Mother-of-pearl (5)
- 6 Climber's aid (3-4)
- 7 Forces chaplain (5)
- 8 Sun owing (5)
- 9 Rupidity (5)
- 14 At that time (4)
- 16 Rounds for firearms (coll.) (4)
- 18 Non-de-plume (3-4)
- 20 Banning (7)
- 21 Gather (5)
- 23 Unscripted remark (2,3)
- 24 Walk slowly (5)
- 26 Caulking material (5)
- 28 Decree (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:  
ACROSS: 5 Wreck, 8 Amendine (Recommending), 9 Image, 10 Campaign, 11 Urrin, 14 Shy, 16 Embark, 17 Estate, 18 Inn, 20 Alone, 22 Smallpox, 25 Official, 26 Alteilan, 27 Tving, DOWN: 1 Watch, 2 Gem, 3 Ideas, 4 Knight, 6 Rubinate, 7 Cogitate, 12 Small, 13 Maintain, 14 Skii, 15 Yen, 19 Nameless, 21 Elder, 22 Sprout, 23 Expat.

### BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer South

North  
♦8 6  
♦Q 10 5  
♦10 7 6 3  
♦K 8 6 5

West  
♦A 10 9 4  
♦9 7 2  
♦8 5 2  
♦7 4 3

East  
♦7 3 2  
♦8 6 4 3  
♦A 9 4  
♦A Q 2

South  
♦K O J 5  
♦A K J  
♦K O J  
♦J 10 9

Oh dear! I shall have to give up offering well-meant advice and stick strictly to reporting facts. This deal produced a peccy letter from a correspondent.

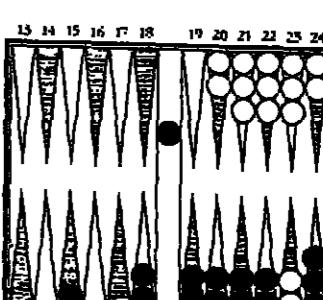
The bidding was simple: South opened Two No-trumps and North raised to game. West led ♦4 against Three No-trumps, obviously following my recent suggestion that the lead of a ten against a no-trump contract implied a strong suit with two higher honours. Dummy followed with the six and East (who had clearly noticed my other recent point, that rather than make an apparently useless attempt with near-garbage in partner's suit, it was more useful to give a count) thoughtfully played the two to suggest a three-card holding.

When ♦6 was declarer, declarer still had two guards in spades and he attacked clubs. Now it was too late for the defenders to get a long card in any suit working and they came to only the four obvious tricks (a spade, a diamond and two clubs).

Yes, the lead of ♦10 defeats the contract when West ducks his partner's next spade return. Yes, East could have done everything that was necessary by covering ♦6 with his seven at trick one after which, again, West ducks the next spade return.

But the real culprit on the hand was declarer! Why? He really should have tried ♦8 from dummy at trick one – a play that could hardly cost and would have provided an unexpected (bird stopper) in spades.

### BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



Here's a position that confronted Murray "Quickdouble" Sharp at the Double Fives the other night. Murray, playing Black, had not only doubled early but had also accepted the double when all around him in the chouette had very sensibly passed. In his own inimitable style he had turned the game round to reach the position above. Should he redouble to 8?

The position is highly volatile and could change dramatically over the next two rolls. If Murray enters with any 6, White will be all but lost. Conversely, if he stays on the bar and White rolls a 6 then all the pressure will be on Murray. Most people have a natural fear of doubling from the bar against a 5-point board but Quickdouble is not of this ilk, and he redoubled with hardly a moment's thought. His opponent took Quickdouble rolled 63 and comfortably won the game. The question is: were the double and take correct?

The answer is that this is an excellent benchmark position. Black should double and White should take if White were any weaker, for example if he had a 4-point, or if he had a blot exposed on his 6-point, then he should drop.

How do you evaluate this over the board? Black should note that if he rolls a 6, or he stays on the bar and then White doesn't roll a 6, he will become a prohibitive favourite, so now is the time to double. White should note that if Black doesn't roll a 6 and White does roll a 6, then he will have a very strong position. As this will happen nearly 25 per cent of the time, this gives him enough chances to take. The final point to make is that success goes to players who are good at applying pressure. Quickdouble Sharp certainly did that in this position, applying exactly the right pressure at the right time.

# Clocking the sun

If you want to use a sundial to tell the time, writes Caroline Donald, make sure it is custom-built for your garden – or you may find inaccuracies creeping in

As we hurtle towards the year 2000, how we measure time gains a special significance. So it was with a sense of satisfaction that I sought out David Harber, maker of sundials, at his Oxford workshop. The millennium bug may be a cause of increasing concern, yet the sun will rise and set regardless of computer crashes, and Harber's dials will continue to measure the hours, using methods first discovered thousands of years before Christ effectively started the whole millennium business.

Harber's works range from a simple obelisk that casts a shadow on markers set in the ground, to a copper hemisphere resembling a tilted mortar that is engraved with the hours and the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and owes its origins to Berossos, an Egyptian priest, who worked out the earth's circumference to within 500 miles, 300BC. "Over here, in AD1400 we still thought that we would fall off the edge," says Harber.

Having left Dartington school at 15, Harber discovered at first hand that the Earth is round when he learnt to fly. Meanwhile he also acquired metalwork skills while running a travelling theatre group on a boat in France. And then "it all suddenly gelled. I bought a book on how to make sundials and the end result was my first armillary sphere, which was snapped up." Today, these armillary spheres, which look like a cross between an old-fashioned globe and a ball of string, are his best-selling line, with prices from about £1,500 for a brass one (they also come in bronze and stainless steel). This may seem a bit steep, but all his dials are custom-built, and marked with mottoes and measurements that are important to the client.

"You can move them to a degree," says Harber, relishing the unintentional pun, "but they need to be in the exact location to work absolutely accurately. You can move them north and south quite easily, but they start to get inaccurate if you shift them east and west. For instance, there is a four-minute difference between the time when the sun is overhead in Greenwich and in Oxfordshire."

From the spot in Greenwich or Oxfordshire, Edinburgh or Timbuktu, the dial can be inscribed with the exact direction and number of miles to a significant place for a client anywhere in the world. "Invariably, they are exotic," says Harber. "We don't get many pointing to Milton Keynes."

The tradition of mottoes goes back to the days when sundials were the only form of time-keeping in a community, and were usually erected by the local squire or a

scholar. "They were seen as oracles, the voice of something ethereal and spiritual," says Harber.

He provides a list for clients taken from dials of the past, usually exhorting the reader not to be a wastrel, or reminding him in a cheeky way that death is just around the corner, though the translation given for *carpe diem* – Ah, take the cash in hand and waive the rest – is more an example of the blithe sense of humour of Harber and his wife Sophie (who runs the business side of things) than of their linguistic skills.

Although they look simple, Harber's wall-mounted dials, similar to those you see on churches and manor houses, are painstakingly calculated for that wall alone.

He is as polite as he can be about the mass-produced sundials you can buy at garden centres: "It's nice that people are interested, but it seems a shame to spend your money on something that doesn't fulfil its purpose. There was a batch that came over from the Far East, where the gnomon [the shadow-caster] had been made for an obscure latitude somewhere below the latitude of the south of France, and fixed the wrong way round, so they were never going to tell the time."

At the moment Harber is making a slate-and-copper wall dial especially for his stand at the Chelsea Flower Show. It has been mathematically calculated exactly to mark noon for the occasion – a risky move, but an impressive one if it comes off, in front of the world's smartest horticultural clientele.

When we met, Harber was about to set off for Chicago to unveil an armillary sphere for a bank, then on to Martha's Vineyard for another installation. "Most of the people I meet are really interesting," he says of his necessarily financially comfortable clientele (though prices start at a not-too-unreasonable £500). "They want to put some thought into what they are commissioning. What you say on a dial should be done glibly; it is going to be there for quite a while."

In June, he completes a sundial for a private client made from monoliths of 150-million-year-old Jurassic stone that will mark the positioning of the planets around the sun at dawn on 1 January, AD2000. It will take 27,000 years for these positions to repeat. Now that is quite a while.

David Harber Sundials (01491-576956; fax: 01491-413524; e-mail: sales@harber-sundials.demon.co.uk; website: www.harber-sundials.demon.co.uk)



**Sun king:**  
David Harber  
at his Oxford  
workshop with  
retro-tech  
sundials.  
"Invariably,  
they are  
exotic. We  
don't get many  
pointing to  
Milton Keynes"  
Photograph: Peter  
Macdiarmid

## Join the gleam team

Sally Staples brightens up her life and her furniture on a French polishing course

If you have any old furniture that seems past redemption and has been stashed away in an attic, think again. In just a few hours you could learn how to strip away a dull or stained surface and use the skills of traditional French polishing to bring a glossy shine to an old table or chair – or, indeed, any piece of wood that needs a new lease of life.

All that's required is that you bring to six three-hour sessions a pair of rubber gloves, some protective clothing and the item that needs restoration.

Martin Masterson, the French polisher and tutor who runs a course at London's Kensington and Chelsea adult education college, will provide students with all the other materials for just £5 a head. These include steel wool, methylated spirits, old rags, white spirit, sandpaper and the French polish itself.

Stripping the wood is the initial task, and on the day I was there a group of 10 stood round to watch as Martin illustrated the technique on an oak breakfast tray. The first stage is to remove all the traces of the old polish or varnish. With antique furniture that has been French polished, this is usually done with meths. But modern pieces that have been lacquered or varnished need to be treated with paint-stripper.

Martin rubbed a meths-soaked rag all over the tray's surface until it became a little

sticky. Then he took some steel wool and rubbed from side to side, following the grain of the wood as the polish was gradually removed. Once the tray's surface was quite pale, coarse sandpaper was used to remove any scratches and dents in the wood. Next it was sanded down with fine paper to regain the smooth surface.

### Using gentle movements Martin demonstrated how to retain some of the natural irregularities. Part of the attraction of wood is that some marks are visible

At that stage the students set about stripping their own pieces of furniture. Tony Colombo had brought in a large mahogany box once used by an architect for pens and pencils. Louloune Kuschke had a rosewood box and other students had variously brought a bedside table, a six-legged stool and a box made from beech.

Everyone worked at their own pace, and Martin walked round the class giving advice and preparing for the next stage: staining the wood.

"If you go into shops, they will try to sell you dozens of different colours for staining wood," he said. "But in fact all you need are

two basic colours – dark oak and red mahogany. By mixing and diluting these two you can achieve almost any colour you want."

Martin explained that the mahogany box should not be painted with the mahogany stain, as the effect would be too red. Instead he recommended a dark oak stain. As all the stains are oil based, they should be diluted with

piece of wadding inside a rag and moulding it with his thumb and finger into the shape of a mouse. The rag must be free of lint, to avoid bits of fabric sticking on to the wood during polishing.

Before the rubber comes into play, a special polishing mop made from camel hair is used to coat the surface with a full-strength solution of the polish, which should be diluted by one-third to two with methylated spirits. The second and subsequent layers are put on with the rubber, and the polishing must be done in a figure of eight to keep the layers thin and evenly distributed.

A drop of linseed oil is added to the wood to lubricate the polish, and the process is repeated many times until the required effect is achieved.

The final touches involve removing the oil from the polish by squeezing the rubber several times in undiluted polish and gently wiping over the surface until all oil traces are gone. Students are advised to leave their furniture to dry for at least a week before using it.

The French polishing course at Kensington and Chelsea College, London, (0171-573 5333) runs for six weeks and costs £69. Martin Masterson also runs a course on decorative surface which includes tortoiseshell, crackle glazing, marbling and wood graining.



Shining example: a French polisher at work. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

There are more interesting things than sport on a Saturday afternoon.  
Murder, for instance.

THE SATURDAY PAPER continues A&E "The Body Snatchers" on Saturday 9am, BBC2. Doctor Who, "The Caves of Androzani", on Saturday 10am, BBC1. The Afternoon, 3pm-4pm

BBC RADIO 4

92.95FM & 198SW

YOU'LL SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY

## Wham, bam, thank you fans, then pile in for the celebrations



MIKE  
ROWBOTTOM  
ON THE  
HIGHS AND  
LOWS OF  
FOOTBALL  
VIDEOS

THERE are so many little ways in which one can make family life run more smoothly: No shouting down or interrupting during meal times, no playing with Space Invader games or virtual pets after supper time, No singing after bedtime.

These are innovations which, due to local resistance, I have yet to establish in my household. But in time I feel confident that I shall mention them again... In the meantime, however, one Good Idea has taken hold, a means of avoiding those wearing and ultimately pointless, arguments about who recorded over who's programme on what tape. The solution is simple, and it is this: a named videotape for each member of the family.

There only seems to be one operating difficulty with this

system. Why is it that my tape is filled with inviolable recordings of *Top of the Pops*, *Tellytubbies* and *Home Front*?

Pondering on the iniquity of this arrangement one evening, I sought solace in a number of videos which were incontestably mine. Sporting videos, that is: "So Billy Bonds lifts that famous old trophy again," Brian Moore intones. "The prelude to a homecoming down the streets of London's East End, that for its fervour and its warmth would be almost impossible to match... It's one big happy Hammers family..."

The tone of West Ham United's official video history is swiftly established. "Relive the Hammers' greatest moments," the front cover urges. Three FA Cups, one European Cup-Winners' Cup – reasonable pickings in a 103-year his-

tory without being overwhelming. Put it this way – there is space and time to appreciate each victory fully.

The familiar images roll again: Trevor Brooking stooping to head the only goal of the 1980 FA Cup Final. Ha. Arsenal. Didn't win that one, did you? Alan Taylor securing the same trophy five years earlier with a pair of goals which left Fulham's keeper, Peter Mellor, looking like a man in need of intensive counselling.

And those vivid pictures of the 1984 Cup final celebrations, where wing-hal Eddie Bovington bows his team-mates over the head with a supporters' replica of a giant claret-and-sky-blue hammer. Nowadays, of course, you wouldn't get such an item through the turnstile – and not because of its size.

These club videos can have hidden dangers for those participating. Moore maintains his usual off-screen presence – the kindly uncle, jollying the party along – and in that respect he is lucky, because there is no record of any fashion *faux pas*.

Alas, his interviewees are not so fortunate – and among them, none is less fortunate than Brooking, fresher of face and darker of mane than he appears on *Match of the Day* these days. His contribution, thoughts on the essential qualities of the club he served, are undermined by the impact of the jersey he has chosen. It's a kind of lurid green, white and black contour map. I can't think about it any more...

The overall effect of watching such videos is reassuring rather than inspiring. It is an act of confirmation, as much as af-

firmation. And I admit, one of the satisfactions for me is the fact that no one else in this family is in on it.

"This makes the local elections look interesting," commented my wife as the history looped back to the club's previous incarnation as Thames Iron Works. Her patience was strained still further by my next choice of viewing: *The World's Greatest Goals, Vol II* – sweet revenge for the simplicities of *Home Front*.

If you equate football with sex – for the purposes of argument – then these "greatest goal" compilations are all about the basic act, over and over and over again. There is precious little foreplay – it's pass, score, cross, score; pass, score. Wham, bam, thank you fans, and everyone piling in for the celebration.

But as I watched the balls being thrashed into the net from every conceivable angle – Norbert Nachtwald, Goal! Bixente Lizarazu, Goal! Yvan Leborgne, Goal! – to musical backing that sounded like Lieutenant Pigeon – plink-plonk, kerplunk, plonk-plonk, plonk – a dismal fact was borne in upon me that this was getting boring.

Cut a goal out of its context, and it is like taking a fish from its watery habitat. It may wiggle about a bit, but its power to move is severely diminished. I was experiencing Meaning Deficiency Syndrome and I knew that I had to act fast. Thankfully, help was at hand: The 1966 World Cup Final. England v West Germany. The full match!

It is, of course, a wonderful match, an historic occasion. But who thought it was all over.

In that moment I recalled the previous time I had watched this match. It had ended, for me, shortly after Martin Peters had given England the lead. I made a mental note to concentrate much harder next time.

"These videos are for sad people," says my wife. She is clearly wrong. And, as soon as I can think of the reasons why, I will argue my case...

## Indurain's team give Hunt his final polish

A British cyclist has shown his will to succeed by defeating some top Tour sprinters. Robin Nicholl talked to him

JEREMY HUNT is a self-made bike rider. With fine tuning from the team that guided Miguel Indurain to five Tour de France triumphs, he could be destined for great success.

Now there are hints that he could be ready for his first major event, the Tour of Spain, just three years after talent-spotter Francis Lafarge tipped off his fellow Banesto officials about a rare specimen – an Englishman with a sprint potent enough to win important races.

As the reign of Indurain closed with retirement, so Hunt arrived fresh and ambitious in the Spanish camp. A year later he was revealing the makings of another winner.

He dented the fast-finishing reputations of Erik Zabel and Italian Mario Cipollini in a Spanish stage race. Hunt out-sprinted the German in Zaragoza a month after Zabel had won the Milan to San Remo classic.

Cipollini, who rates himself the world's fastest finisher, was also in Hunt's wake, but two weeks before that victory Hunt had been having serious doubts.

"Then I won a stage in the French Tour de la Sarthe and it reassured me that I could make it as a professional," he said.

Hunt's confidence gathered momentum and he finished the year with 10 victories, nine of them in Union Cycliste Internationale races, which made him the seventh most prolific racer of the year.

Zabel has twice won the green jersey of top points-scorer in the Tour de France, and Cipollini took the points jersey in last year's Giro d'Italia. Those are major targets for top sprinters, and Hunt claimed

his apprentice colours with the points jersey in the aptly named Tour de l'Avenir (the Tour of the Future).

Six years before Lafarge "found" him, Hunt had proved he had the grit to make a bike rider. "In fact he spits gravel," said Colin Lewis, who was a team-mate of Tom Simpson in the 1967 Tour de France that cost Simpson his life.

"Because he has had a tough family life, Jeremy is as hard as nails and you need that to be a top professional. He is a self-made 'bikie', and is that tough he will race on nothing. I once said that he would sleep in a bus shelter if it was necessary, and he gives nothing away.

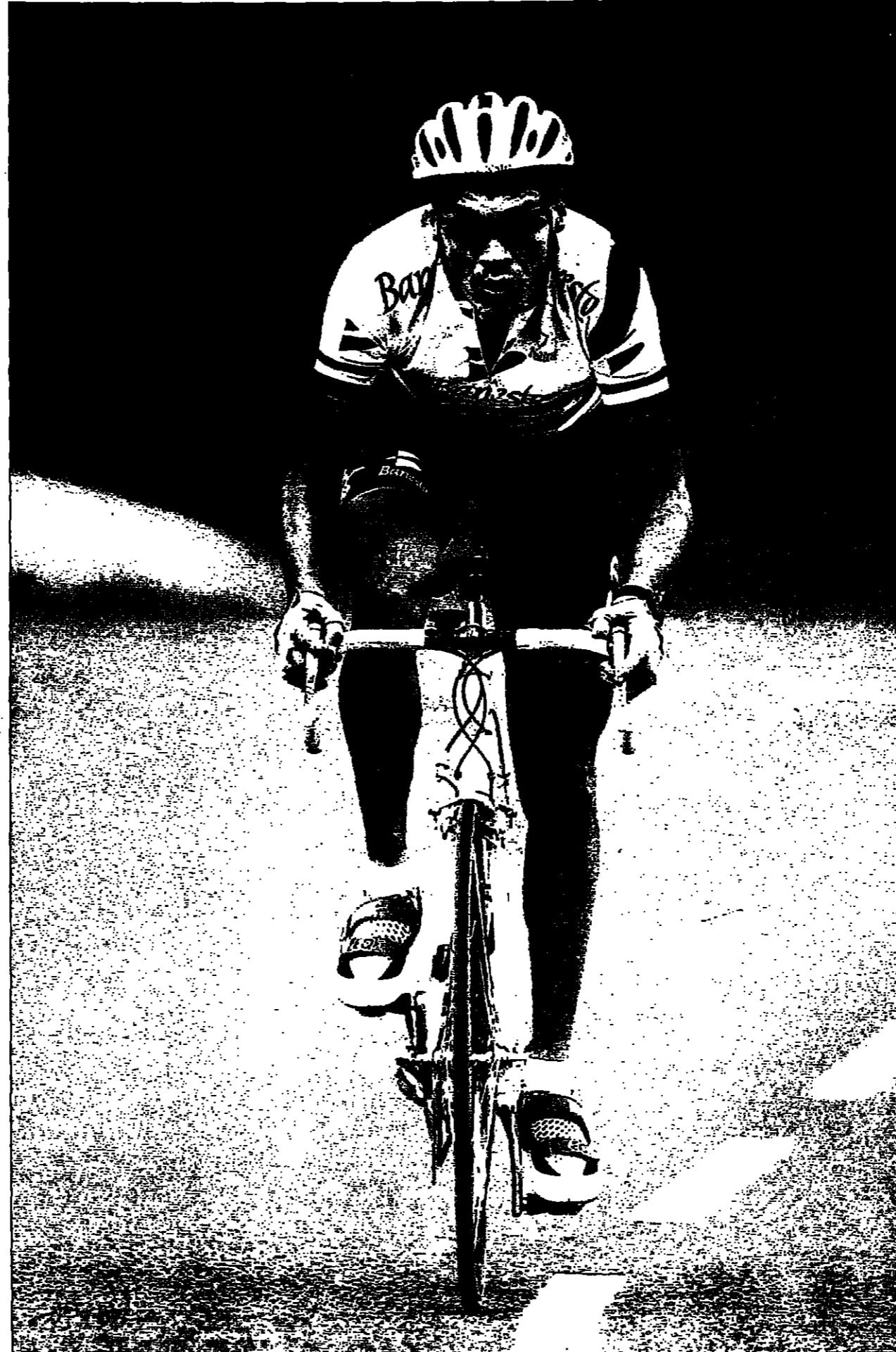
"He thrives in mucky weather," said Lewis who first met Hunt when the callow 15-year-old walked into his Devon clubroom and said he wanted to be a bike racer like his dad.

After Hunt won the British junior road race title in 1991, Lewis got him a place with a club in Metz, and then with another team based in Northern France.

"Out there it is the university of racing. Here it is just the high school," said Lewis whose protégé rapidly repaid the faith with 15 successes in his second year.

Hunt's hardness helped him to become British road race champion last year when he got up from a jarring crash to win. It has also become his undoing especially when faced with a 30-hour-a-week training regime.

"I got a bit carried away with training, and my body was not used to it. I cannot yet cope with really hard training," said Hunt who was born in Saskatchewan, Canada, 24 years ago.



Jeremy Hunt shows the style which encouraged Banesto to invest in his potential

"I got ill too, and as soon as my health goes down, everything goes out the window. I had come through the apprentice stage with Banesto. Now I have to start all over again. I trained too hard after

I was ill and it would not go away."

The lung infection has set him back in a year when, with the right form, he could be tackling his first three-week tour in September. "I might be riding

the Tour of Spain. It is a possibility if I am showing well in August."

His dreams lie with the one-day classics. "I would like to be a classics rider like I was as an amateur because that is what I

am good at. My big ambition is to win a classic or a world road race championship."

Banesto's handlers have the skill and patience. Hunt has the qualities, and only time will tell if the mix is right.

### QUOTES OF THE WEEK

- I would say that team spirit was the real star of the season. Arsène Wenger, explains why Arsenal won the Premiership.
- Two people have died today – an alcoholic [the actor Kevin Lloyd] and an ex-footballer [Justin Fashanu]. When you put it into that kind of perspective it is only a football game. Tony Adams, Arsenal's one-time heavy hitting captain, waxes philosophical after securing the Premiership title.
- We recognise what champions are made of and after 10 straight wins you have to hold your hands up to Arsenal. They deserve our praise. Alex Ferguson, Manchester United's manager, shows gladness after securing the Premiership crown.
- They must have the will to win, be desperate for success. Alec Stewart, England new cricket captain, on the qualities England players must possess.



CHRIS  
MAUME

SPORT  
ON TV

mer. But he'll be remembered with affection, partly for the rich, booming quality of a voice that at moments of high drama seemed to have a life of its own, breaking free and taking off like a homing pigeon.

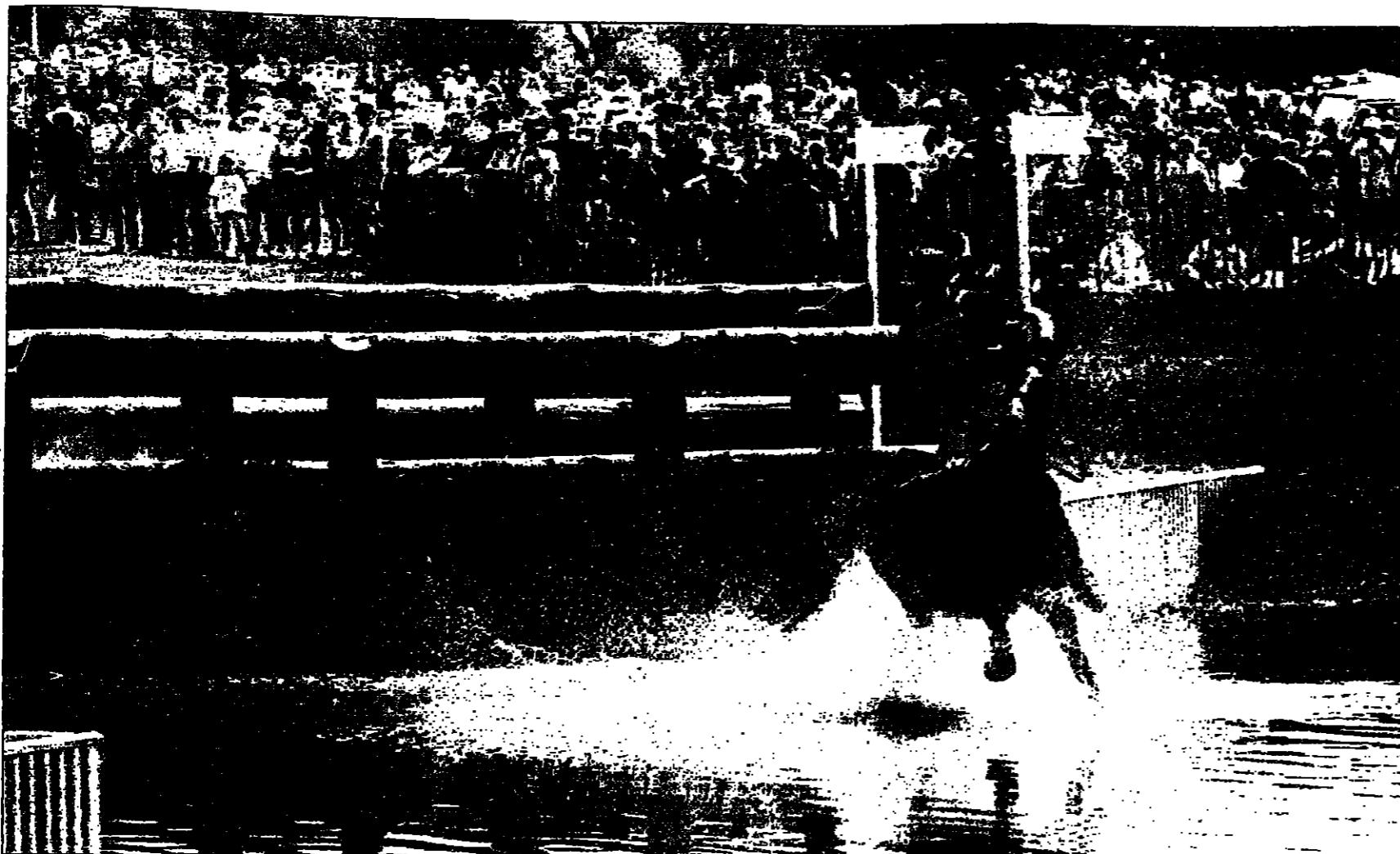
The *Sports Show* exhibited his BBC radio commentary for Geoff Hurst's second goal in the 1966 World Cup final: "It's hit the bar!" roars Moore. "It must be in!" Wrong, as usual, but in his endearing hammy way. "As biased as ever, as you can see," he remarked back in the studio.

This came during a debate on whether we should use a camera on the goal-line, and Moore was of the old school – "the referee is right even when he's wrong" – though a show of hands put him in a tiny minority.

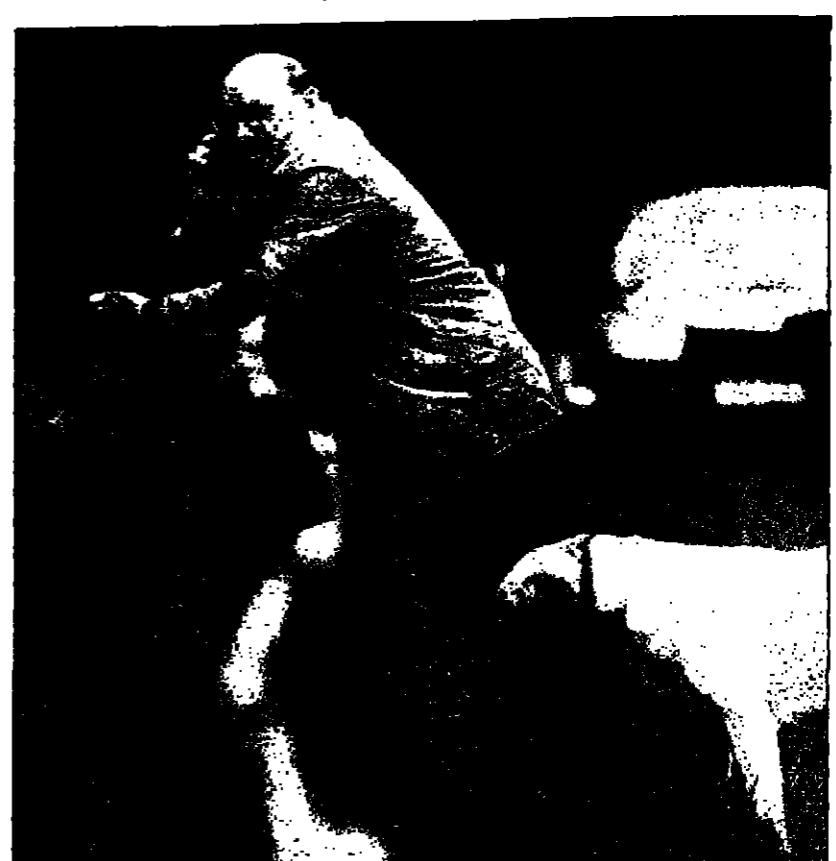
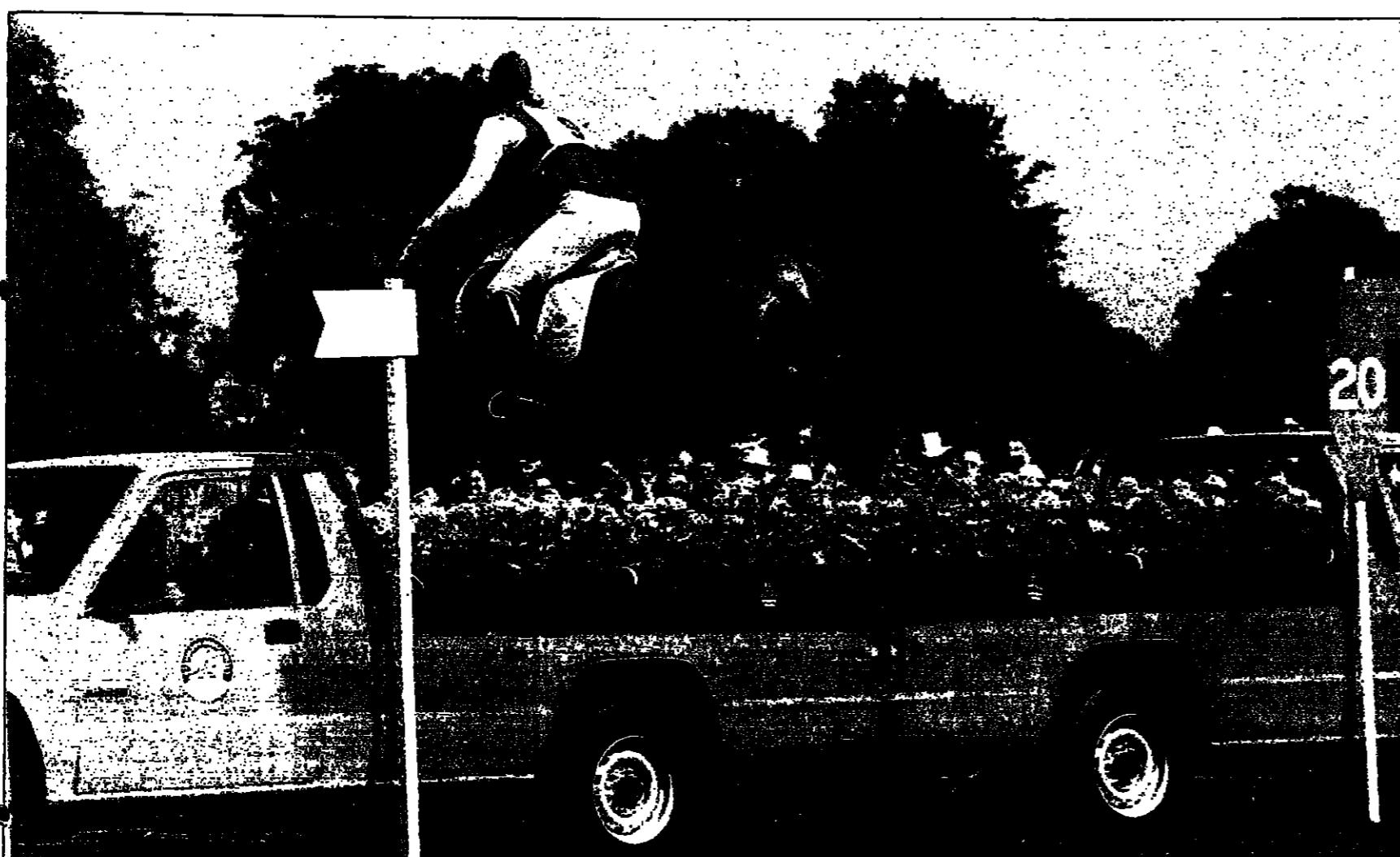
There's a lot of wrong thinking in all this, incidentally. Eamonn Holmes used a recent example of a disallowed goal that was over the line; if it had been given, he said, Barnsley would be staying up and Everton going down. But how does he know that? If that goal had been given – i.e. if history had been different – then history would have gone on being different. Barnsley might have scored that goal then, conceded two more themselves. Who's to say? I'm with Brian Moore: it all evens out, so let the referee get on with it. "At the end of it all, it's a game," he said.

And though that's hopelessly naive, it's a sentiment you want to concur with. So what if a pic's share goes down with their team? Tough.

Asked to pick out his greatest moments, Moore plumped first for the 1989 League decider at Anfield, and it was a classic of its type – starting off with the roar of "Charging through the midfield", the level sustained for "It's up for grabs now", the last word elongated into a dramatic arc. Then the waves crashing against the rocks: "Thomas! Right at the end! An unbelievable climax to the League season!" It's not surprising, in these post-modern times, to find that his words now adorn a T-shirt on sale up and down the Holloway Road. Maybe it'll have to be ITV on 12 July. Just for old times' sake.



The cross-country course must maintain a difficult balance, being designed to test the competitors' nerve, endurance and speed without endangering them



PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
DAVID ASHDOWN AND PETER JAY

## Hats off to heroic horses and rapid riders

By Genevieve Murphy

AFTER two sedate days of dressage, the Duke of Beaufort's estate is ready to receive the masses. Some 250,000 spectators will have turned up for the four days of the Badminton Horse Trials by the time that the £26,000 first prize is presented here tomorrow – and the vast majority will come for the hurly-burly of today's cross-country.

They come, primarily, to watch intrepid horses and riders jump dauntingly testing fences that most of us would never consider tackling in a month of Sundays. Hugh Thomas, director and

course designer, has no compunction about frightening the living daylights out of the riders, but he is ever anxious to avoid hurting the horses.

Badminton's inaugural contest, back in 1949, was prophetically called "The Most Important Horse Event in Great Britain." It was born as a result of the dismal British performance in the Olympic three-day event of 1948, when it was held at Aldershot.

Having watched the annihilation of the home riders, the last Duke of Beaufort decided to host an annual contest in which Britons could gain experience in the all-round test of dressage,

speed, endurance, cross-country and show jumping. Ten years later the present Duke (then David Somers) was runner-up on Countymen III. Badminton is now the greatest and the oldest three-day event in the world. It attracts all the leading international riders (the winners of the last four Olympic Games are competing here this weekend) and it boasts an enormous outdoor shopping centre.

The 288 trade stands, where you can buy everything from clothes to cookers, will have unloaded a huge quantity of goods over the four days. This morning will be particularly profitable, for regulars know that they have to ar-

rive early on cross-country morning in order to avoid the traffic jams. What better than to breakfast here at one of the food stalls before going on a shopping spree?

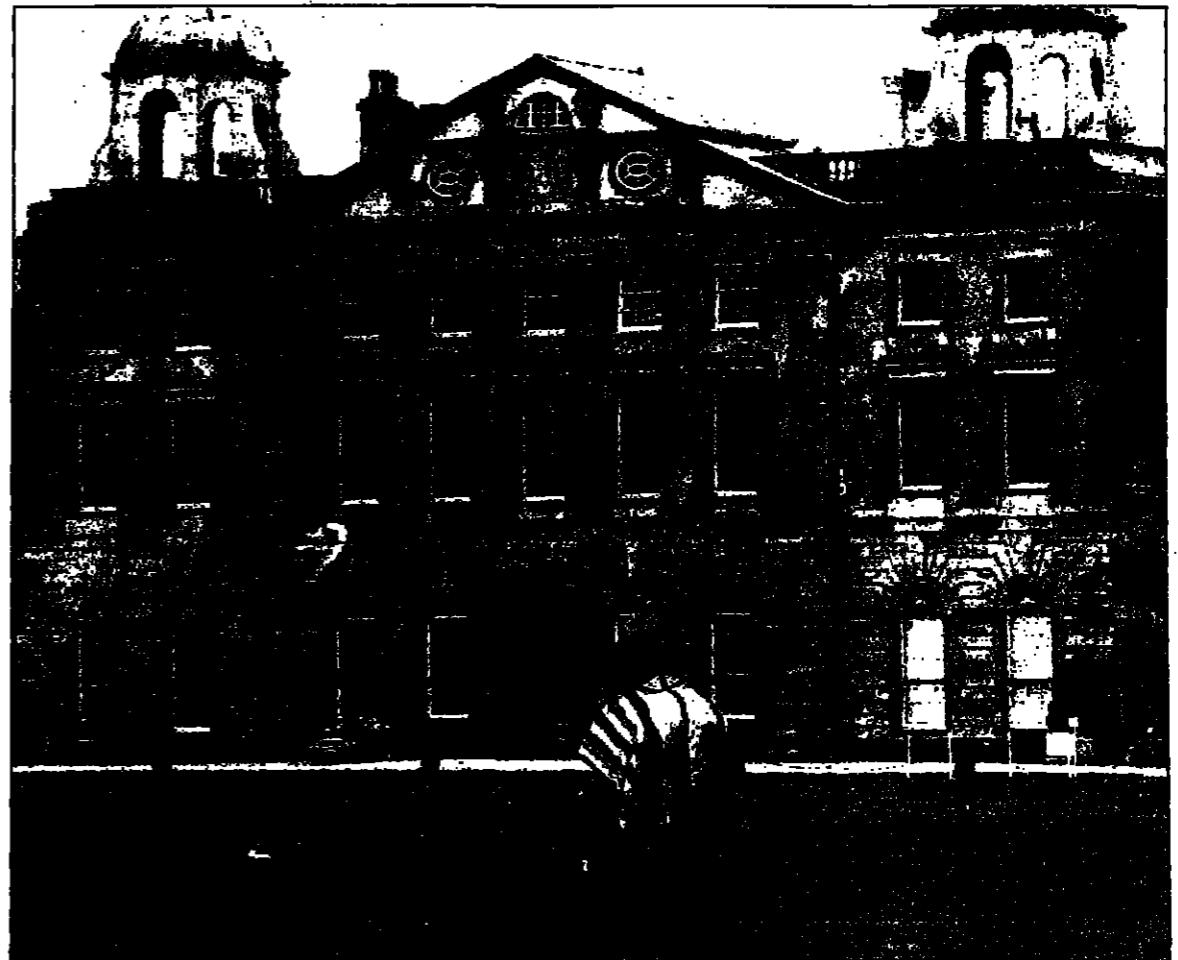
Thomas has no worries about this year's traders failing to book for 1999. He already has a long waiting list of those who are eager to fill any vacancy.

● Copies of these photographs – and any others by The Independent's sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Hallam – can be ordered by telephoning The Independent on 0171-293-2534.

Yesterday at Badminton, page 19



Stable stables: Horses return after the day's competition



Formal attire: Horse and rider (above) relax in impressive surroundings after completing their dressage test, while (left) great care is taken to ensure hats and gloves are immaculate





# Balding nurtures Derby dream on Watership Down

For Ian Balding there will never be another Mill Reef but in the serenity of his historic stables he is preparing a horse that could bring a second Derby before retirement beckons. Greg Wood reports

THE rejuvenating properties of Watership Down are not, it seems, restricted to rabbits. Ian Balding will be 60 years old in November, and took out his first trainers' licence when the Beatles still had short hair, but you could never guess it from the bounce in his stride at evening stables. In fact, there is something almost childlike about the excitement and pleasure with which he greets his horses, with a pet-name and a Polo mint for each. But then, as he points out several times, Kingscere, his stable at the bottom of Watership Down, is "a very special place".

On the telephone, it might sound a little starry-eyed. When you are there, even on an overcast spring evening, Balding is simply stating the obvious. When John Porter, one of the finest trainers of any generation, built Park House Stables more than a century ago, he did so with the same care, patience and attention to detail that he later showed to the six Derby winners he prepared on its gallops. The red-brick buildings seem to glow with health and history. Such is the sense of heritage that, as Balding admits, its freehold almost comes with a responsibility to succeed.

"The beauty of Kingscere has been one of the driving forces of my life," he says. He arrived in 1964, as assistant trainer to Peter Hastings-Bass, whose daughter, Emma, was to become Mrs Balding five years later. Barely three months into his apprenticeship at Kingscere, Hastings-Bass died suddenly, and at just 25 years of age, Balding took over as the master of Park House.

"I felt at the time that I was too young, and I was a jockey at heart. I hadn't ridden in the Grand National and there were all sorts of things I wanted to do, but in those days the Jockey Club wouldn't let you train as a professional and ride as an amateur. Luckily I inherited a lot of good owners and horses and



Ian Balding: 'Watership Down is a very special place. The beauty of Kingscere has been one of the driving forces of my life'

Photograph: Robert Hallam

the following year, which was my first full season. I think I was the leading English trainer, behind [Ireland's] Paddy Prendergast, who won the title."

Five years later, a juvenile colt arrived at Kingscere who would take Balding that vital step further. He worked like a champion but at first seemed sure to be only a sprinter. Instead, he was a phenomenon called Mill Reef, and the further he went, the faster he went. He won the Derby, Arc, Eclipse and King George, and would probably have won any 2,000 Guineas since the war except the one he contested, which included another great champion, Brigadier Gerard. John Porter would certainly have approved.

The 2,000 Guineas, as it happens, has eluded Balding

ever since, but what with the subsequent efforts of Lochsong at sprint distances and Selkirk over a mile, it is one of the few major events that has.

And now there may be a red-brick box at Park House with another Derby winner inside. Border Arrow, a son of Selkirk whose liver-chestnut complexion is a perfect match for his surroundings, finished third behind King Of Kings in the 2,000 Guineas last Saturday, and is Balding's most serious contender for the ultimate Classic since Mill Reef himself was working up on Watership Down.

"Mill Reef was a horse in a lifetime, probably the best to have raced in this country since the war," he says. "They don't come along very often, even to the Vincent O'Briens, but you'd like to think that if you train

decent horses for good owners for this length of time, you might have two in that span that would win the Derby. When you've done it once, you live to try and do it again."

Not that even his trainer suspected that Border Arrow might bring another Classic back to Kingscere, until his first race, a maiden at Newmarket last October, which the colt won singly in a useful time. His starting price of 33-1 was a measure of the surprise at the yard.

"We had no idea that he was any good at all until the last four of his first race," Balding says. "He's looks very like Selkirk, and he's not unlike him in temperament, the main thing being that he's incredibly lazy at home. When Selkirk won first time as a two-year-old I hadn't given him a single good entry,

so obviously I hadn't thought he was any good either."

Third place in the Guineas might make Border Arrow the form horse at Epsom anyway, but punters may get another look at him in the Dante Stakes at York on Wednesday. "It's a difficult decision," Balding says, "because in the last 20 years I think only The Minstrel has run in the Guineas, run again and then won the Derby. But I suspect that if we want the optimum chance in the Derby, he'll

need to be a bit more experienced and battle-hardened. He's had just three runs, all down the straight mile at Newmarket, and the Dante will give us three and a half weeks to give him a bit of a let-off and freshen him up."

There are questions about Border Arrow, such as his stamina and his ability to act on fast ground, which will be answered only on Derby Day itself, yet there is a distinct air of optimism radiating from his box in the corner of the yard where all the best horses live.

Balding sees him every day, but the pleasure clearly does not diminish. "What a wonderful colour," he murmurs, lost in contemplation as Border Arrow stands to attention for his evening inspection. "What a lovely horse."

He is Balding's best chance of saddling another Derby winner, and also probably his last. Andrew, his son, has spent the last two years with Lynda and Jack Ramsden, and will soon return as his father's assistant. He is "mad keen" to take over the yard which his father has managed to buy outright over the

course of the last 30 years, and will do so "sooner rather than later", probably at the start of the new millennium.

"It's a wonderful life and I love it," Balding says, "but it's also very demanding. It's akin to being a football manager, a very mercurial existence when the relatively few high points happily outweigh the many low points."

Balding will be happy to play a bit more golf and tennis."

The lowest point of all came in 1972, when Mill Reef broke his leg on the gallops. "The vet knelt down and felt it and said, 'It feels like a bag of marbles', and my heart just sank. But one of the Park House outbuildings, which in Porter's day was a Catholic chapel, made an ideal makeshift operating theatre, and a few days later, surgeons saved Mill Reef for what turned

out to be one of the great stud careers.

The old chapel is now the "colour room", where tack and silks hang on the wall as if in a museum, along with trophies, winners' blankets and photographs of triumphs past. It is another source of pride for Balding, and you would not bet against him adding to the collection even when his son's name is on the licence.

For he is at least half-serious when he says that an ambition for his retirement is to "lose some weight and ride in a few point-to-points. My family and friends might be a bit disturbed, but I feel young enough and fit enough to want to do it". Given the obvious benefits of a life at Kingscere, you would not want to bet against it - or, for that matter, Border Arrow.

## Cumani's High-Rise in the ascendancy

By Greg Wood

THERE is no doubt a good reason why the Dante Stakes, over the flat, galloping track at York next week, is apparently reckoned a better preparation for Epsom in June than the Derby Trial at Lingfield this afternoon, but at first sight, it is far from obvious. Lingfield, after all, is an undulating downland track with a steep descent into a sharp, left-handed home turn, and thus as close as you will get (with the possible exception of Brighton) to the unique challenge of Epsom.

And yet many leading trainers seem to automatically favour the Dante for their principal Derby hopes, and the winner of next Wednesday's

race will almost certainly emerge from what is a very confused ante-post market to be the clear favourite come the big day itself. Do not be lured into dismissing today's race as a contest for second-stringers, however, for while no horse has won both the Trial and the Classic during the 1990s, three did so in the previous decade, while two recent winners, Bob's Return and Silver Patriarch, have gone on to win the St Leger.

Silver Patriarch, in fact, was just a flared nostril away from beating Benny The Dip at Epsom almost 12 months ago, so the long odds available for the Derby against three of today's runners, Alboostan (33-1), High-Rise (33-1) and Sadian (40-1) could well appear very to win the St Leger.

On bare form to date, Alboostan's second to Border Arrow in the Fielden Stakes gives

generous with the benefit of hindsight.

Not that hindsight is much use to punters, who could do a lot worse than take a small ante-

RICHARD EDMONDSON

NAP: Just Dissident

(Beverly 4.20)

NB: Bristol Channel

(Lingfield 3.40)

post interest on all three in the expectation that they will be sitting on at least one high-value bet by the end of the afternoon. For those who prefer to be more selective, however, it may be that HIGH-RISE (nap 4.10) is the one to back.

On bare form to date, Alboostan's second to Border Arrow in the Fielden Stakes gives

him the most obvious chance, while Sadian's blue-blooded pedigree (by Shirey Heights out of the French Oaks winner, Rafha) will offer encouragement to some. While High-Rise has won only a limited stakes at Pontefract this season, however, he did so in the manner of a very useful colt, and it is also worth remembering that Luca Cumani, his trainer, used to be a jockey at the yard.

The sprint handicap is something of a puzzle, with the stalls arranged on the stands' side but the form horses all drawn low. In the expectation that they will head for the far fall, though,

The Oaks Trial has pointed a Classic winner rather more recently, and it was the way in which User Friendly swept around the turn a few years ago which convinced many punters that she was the

one to back at Epsom. Today's renewal does not appear to be of quite the same quality, however, and Bristol Channel, a half-sister to Tenby, is the only runner with even a half-serious ante-post quote for the Oaks. She is making her seasonal debut, however, as is Godolphin's Shimaal, and there is no worthwhile bet to be had.

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## Carberry to go freelance after Ogden split

LAST season's champion jumps owner, Robert Ogden, yesterday announced the end of his partnership with the jockey Paul Carberry.

The pair's widely expected split, arrived at "by mutual agreement", comes after a three-year association during which the pair have teamed up to win the Tote Gold Trophy, Great Yorkshire Chase and several other big prizes.

Carberry, out of action for the rest of the season after breaking a bone in his leg in a fall at Wetherby on Wednesday, will ride as a freelance, dividing his time between Britain and Ireland.

Speculation is now bound to grow over the identity of a possible replacement rider for Ogden.

Mr Ogden, who will have about 40 horses next season,

the retainer under which Paul Carberry has ridden for Robert Ogden for the past three years has ended by mutual agreement and will not be renewed," Ogden's racing manager, Barry Simpson, said in a statement. "Paul's career has blossomed since joining Mr Ogden and the partnership has been a happy and successful one.

The decision to part company was taken some days ago, before Paul's unfortunate accident at Wetherby on Wednesday. He scored at the Cheltenham Festival on Unguided Missile and on Direct Route at both Aintree and Punchestown in April.

"Mr Ogden would like to take this opportunity to wish Paul a speedy recovery.

## Arrow's flight boosts Alboostan

Simon Holt of Channel 4 Racing gives a runner-by-runner analysis of today's Lingfield Derby Trial

Dashing Chief: Could only stay on at one pace when third to The Glow-Worm and Achilles. Takes a keen hold.

Alboostan: Third to Second Empire at Longchamp last autumn following wins at Goodwood and Beverley. Ran a blinder when going under by a neck to subsequent 2,000 Guineas-third Border Arrow in the Feilden Stakes on his Newmarket reappearance. Sure to improve from that (his home work suggests he has) and must take plenty of beating.

Banker Dwyer: Has shown promise in fair company without getting his head in front. Sadian: Beautifully bred son of the Derby winner Shirley Heights out of the French Oaks winner Rafha. Unbeaten in two minor outings and open to any amount of improvement. Well regarded.

Conclusion: With Border Arrow doing so much to boost the form of the Feilden Stakes, ALBOOSTAN is sure to be hard to beat here. Barry Hills's colt appears to have done very well during the winter and was not knocked about unduly at Newmarket. The danger is likely to be High-Rise who showed an excellent turn of foot at Pontefract and looks a good performer in the making.

## Longchamp - Sunday

1.45 PRIX DE SAINT-GEORGE (Group Three) 5f Penalty Value

1 142 PAS DE REPOSE (168) (Wetherby Brothers) M Hes C Head 4.93 ..... D Deleuze 5

2 6022 PIPER (7) (Marches Family) J Pesse 4.90 ..... C Amazzone 2

3 6050 SPLENNAR (FR) (25) (NO M Boulard 4) ..... G Monier 1.107

4 0021 JENNELLE (FR) (6) (A Corseau) C Dwyer 4.84 ..... L Deltor 3

5 6047 SWIFTY MARINE (FR) (25) (Cyril Humphreys) P Langridge 6.81 ..... O Peeler 4

6 1042 SWIFTY MARINE (FR) (25) (Mick Channon) R Collet 5.10 ..... J Bonet 1

7 1043 SWIFTY MARINE (FR) (25) (Mick Channon) R Collet 5.10 ..... 5 declared

BETTING: 4-1 Pas de Repose, 8-1 Pipper, 12-1 Sainte Marthe, 14-1 Piper, 16-1 Jennelle, 18-1 Swifty Marine

18-1 Hever Rose 8-1 13-1 Sanders 8-2 (T Naughton, GB) drawn 2-1 7 ran

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18-1 Hever Rose



**Tetley's Bitter Cup final:** Springbok inspiration could make the difference for Saracens. **Chris Hewett** reports

## Capital rivals prepare for passion play

FRANÇOIS PIENAAR wins cup finals in the precisely the same way that Louis Luyt makes enemies: efficiently, single-mindedly and with astonishing frequency. He played no fewer than 19 of them back home in South Africa, all as captain, and lost only one. As the late Kitch Christie said to his protégé before the 1995 World Cup final in Johannesburg: "Hey François, when we get this far, we don't lose, eh?" And no, the Springboks did not lose.

Pienaar will not captain Saracens in this afternoon's Tetley's Bitter Cup final at Twickenham; that honour goes to Tony Diprose, a concert pianist of a No 8 whose soft hands and cherubic features tend to conceal the fact that he is a natural leader, his inspirational qualities fired in the flames of recent adversity. But the most celebrated Springbok of modern times will be

alongside him where it matters and as long as his dodgy hamstring permits him to remain there, Sarries will feel their name is on the trophy.

The competitive juices have been flowing at flood level all week, for Pienaar does not subscribe to the theory that sporting journeys are more satisfying than sporting arrivals. When a silver pot is gleaming away on the mountain top, the big flanker from the high veld likes to get there without delay. "It's been a fruitful year for us but it can still come to nothing," he said this week. "It is Saracens' first cup final; for all our achievements, most of the guys do not know what it takes to be a winner. It is time they found out."

Lawrence Dallaglio has been making similar noises on behalf of a Wasps team who discovered the art of winning last season but then suffered a lengthy bout of amnesia:

"No one remembers the runners-up," he snarled. "When we last made the final in 1995, we regarded getting to Twickenham as an achievement in itself. Somehow, it was enough. It's not enough now."

"We've changed our perspective, raised our sights. Sarries have shown great character in taking the Premiership contest down to the wire without being able to put their best players on the field, but we also pride ourselves on our ability to look inside ourselves and produce something extra."

If the imminent collision of two supreme competitive spirits makes today's showpiece the most fascinating in years, it is vital that the game should realise its obvious promise; not just because English rugby is in need of a decent cup final – last year's Leicester-Sale affair was dismal beyond belief – but because the game in London

urgently requires a public relations pick-me-up. Passions are running at a record high across the traditional union heartlands but Saracens apart, the capital clubs have struggled to quicken the imagination and raid the pockets of the vast potential audience on their doorstep.

Disturbingly, Wasps had shifted only half of their 15,000 ticket allocation by Tuesday afternoon and although Twickenham officials remain confident of a sell-out, there is no doubt that Londoners have been slower than their provincial brethren in taking the professional game to heart. "This final is good for London," Dallaglio asserted. "It's our job to make it something to remember."

Whatever happens, rugby will remember the contributions of Michael Lynagh, the most prolific scorer in Test history, and Philippe Sella, the most

capable international of them all. Barring injury, both will play in Saracens' final Premiership match on Thursday. Sella, indeed, aims to return to Twickenham in a fortnight to appear for one side or the other in the Sano Cup. To all intents and purposes, however, this is the grand farewell. It will be emotional in the extreme, their presence capturing the sympathy vote from the 50,000 neutrals in the stands.

Wasps have made a virtue of fronting up against the odds and they are probably the fresher, quicker outfit, regardless of their inexplicable decision to leave Paul Sampson on the bench. But Saracens possess the best front five in England and a half-back pairing of consummate class; if their walking wounded make it all the way to the final whistle, one half of the double will surely be done and dusted.

### SARACENS v WASPS

at Twickenham

G Johnson	15	G Rees
R Constable	14	S Roiser
P Sella	13	M Denney
S Ravenscroft	12	R Henderson
B Daniel	11	L Scrase
M Lynagh	10	A King
K Bracken	9	M Friday
R Grau	1	D Molloy
G Chuter	2	S Mitchell
P Wallace	3	W Green
P Johns	4	M Weedon
D Grewcock	5	S Shaw
B Sturham	6	J Worsley
F Pienaar	7	P Volley
A Diprose, capt.	8	L Dallaglio, capt.

Replacements: 16 M Singer; 17 R Wallace; 18 A Lee; 19 M Oleari; 20 A Bennett; 21 A Oliver; 22 G Borterman.

Replacements: 16 P Sampson; 17 A Gomarsall; 18 M White; 19 A Reed; 20 I Dunston; 21 A Black; 22 T Leota.

Referee: C White (Cheltenham) Kick-off: 3pm (Sky Sports 2)

## Kucera leaves mark on Muster

### Tennis

KAROL KUCERA, the sixth seed, overcame a tentative opening before finding his rhythm against Thomas Muster to breeze into the semi-finals of the German Open in Hamburg yesterday.

Kucera won 6-2, 6-3 after coming back from a break down in the first set, before embarking on a run that saw him take the next nine games and jump into a 4-0 lead in the second set. The 24-year-old Slovak, who is ranked No. 10 in the world, rediscovered his ground strokes, peppering the lines with powerful shots and then frustrating Muster by changing his options with clever drop shots.

Kucera's semi-final opponent will be the Spanish clay court specialist Albert Costa, who beat Fabrice Santoro of France 6-3, 6-4. For Costa, the world No 26, it will be his first semi-final of the year.

Muster, who was briefly ranked world No 1 in 1996, leads the tour with 40 tournament titles on clay, but he has not won on the surface in 18 months and the Austrian has slipped to No 25.

The turning point came in the sixth game, when the two players exchanged a spectacular series of diagonal drop shots. The rally ended with Muster hitting the net, Kucera went on to break Muster's serve and the Austrian never got back into the match.

"Once he takes over, he can put a lot of pressure on you and wrong-foot you," Muster said. "He played a lot of top spin and kept me far behind the baseline."

The German Open represents one of the major form guides for the French Open, the second Grand Slam event of the year which starts on 25 May. "I wouldn't say I am one of the favourites," Kucera said, "but if I am fit enough and I keep playing this well, sure I could win the French Open."

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## Black's dressage delight

### Equestrianism

By Genevieve Murphy  
at Badminton

STUART BLACK, the sole Canadian competing at the Badminton Horse Trials, rode Market Venture to one of the best dressage tests ever seen in three-day eventing when he took the lead here yesterday.

The 12-year-old horse (bred in England, as was his rider who comes from Macclesfield) produced a wonderfully soft and fluent test, which included two perfect flying changes.

Black now leads from two riders sharing second place: New Zealand's Mark Todd on Broadcast News, with whom he won last year's European Open title, and Owen Moore, at present the best of the home riders on his newly acquired mount, Lightfoot. Chris Bartle, who trains the British event team for dressage (and has recently helped Moore in that capacity) is fourth on Word Perfect II.

Black, who moved to Canada in 1977 at the age of 17, has had recent disappointments. Last year, when he was due to compete here for the first time, Market Venture was found to have an abscess the day before the horse inspection and had to be withdrawn.

This year, Black and his mount arrived in England two and a half weeks before Badminton "in case anything went wrong again". The horse took the plane journey and everything else in his stride, so much so that the charged atmosphere is a positive help in the dressage arena. "It picks him up and brings out a bit of flair," Black said.

The standard of dressage was higher than on Thursday and overnight leader, Daisy Dick, had slipped to 12th by the time this phase was completed.

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Johnson's talent will be difficult to replace at Saracens

Photograph: Allsport

## Big game occupying Johnson's thoughts

Saracens' South African full-back may make a decision to retire after the club's attempt on the double. **Chris Hewett** talked to him

IF Gavin Johnson was once a model of uncertainty, he is no longer quite so sure of himself. Saracens' imposing South African full-back agonised long and hard before throwing in his lot with the north Londoners and spent much of this season doubting whether his rebellious body would allow him to play more than a walk-on part in his club's courageous challenge for a first professional league and cup double. Now that he is playing, he is in two minds as to whether he should continue doing so. Truly, his decision is final.

Under the circumstances, it is a minor miracle that he should have pulled off the most decisive tackle of the season to date; an inspirational dash of defensive brilliance that may yet win Saracens the Allied Dunbar Premiership. "Yes, that was an important tackle," he says, recalling the last minute – nay, last second – corner-flagging hit that denied Jamie Williams, his Harlequins opposite number, what would have been a match-winning and Premiership-deciding try at The Stoop 10 days ago. "I'm quite proud of that one."

It is perfectly conceivable, likely even, that Johnson has only two games of big-time rugby left to him. A lifelong fisherman and passionate wildlife enthusiast, he has a 40-kilometre stretch of virgin Zambian game reserve waiting for him the moment he retires and he is currently weighing the obvious attractions of a Hemingwayesque life in the Upper Zambezi against the prospect of another season of tough Premiership activity in lower Watford. Well, what would you do?

Less than a month ago, Johnson's mind was uncharac-

teristically close to being made up; after Saracens' outstanding semi-final victory at Northampton, the guarded and very private Springbok from the Transvaal quietly let it be known that he would leave England at the end of the season and take over the management of his Zambian business interests in person. At which point, the Sarries management asked him to reconsider. He has been chewing the fat ever since.

"It's 95 per cent certain that I'll go back to Africa," he said this week. "The game reserve is upstream of Victoria Falls; remote, untouched and extremely beautiful. We have hippo and crocodile, outstanding fishing and wonderful bird life. It's a dream, really. I've always had a serious love affair with the bush, with wild Africa, and the chance to combine that passion with a business venture of huge potential excites me."

"Having said that, the reserve is in dependable hands at the moment and there is no good business reason why it shouldn't stay that way for another season. I have another year on my Saracens contract and while they're happy to release me if I decide to go, they've asked me to consider staying on. Six months ago, I wouldn't have given it a second thought. Now, though, I'm enjoying my rugby so much that it's a possibility."

Johnson was born into South African farming stock 31 years ago, played three Currie Cup finals with Transvaal and emerged as a serious Test challenger to Andre Joubert, the Rolls-Royce of Springbok full-backs. He made three appearances in François Pienaar's triumphant 1995 World Cup-

winning campaign; indeed, he confronted Gareth Rees, the Canadian Wasp who opposes him today, in what became known as the Battle of Boet Erasmus. Neither went the distance; Johnson withdrew with concussion while Rees was sent off for trying to concuss everyone else.

It was Pienaar, now Saracens' player-coach, who first planted the seeds of an English sojourn in Johnson's mind. "He was looking for a full-back and thought of me. I gave him an adamant 'no way' at first but he talked me round. I'd signed a three-year contract with the South African union, but Louis Luyt obliged by releasing me early and the next thing I knew, I was here in London.

"I'd been in the British Isles before – I played for Blackrock College in Ireland for six months – but I don't suppose for a moment that I'd have come back had it not been François' idea. His leadership of the Springboks was quite outstanding and if anything, his abilities are even greater now. He always makes you feel that victory is possible, that you can achieve the ultimate on a rugby field, and his impact here at Saracens has been something else."

Frustratingly, any early impact Johnson might have made was blunted by injury. Saracens knew he was a high-quality marksman and an extraordinarily accomplished kicker out of hand – the best in the Premiership, perhaps – but try as their physios might, they could not get him on to the pitch.

Even now, he has played only 11 Premiership games for the title challengers and two of those were at the fag end of last season.

"There were two separate

problems with my hamstring and my left knee went as well," he said. "I couldn't seem to get myself fit and I ended up feeling pretty negative about things. I came to the conclusion that I'd had enough of rugby and should start thinking about my future outside the game. But the club were very supportive and full of encouragement and in recent weeks, my body has started to behave and I've loved every minute of it."

"Whatever I decide to do – and I'll be speaking to the club next week – I feel very privileged to be playing in an English cup final. I've been fortunate enough to have experienced my fair share of special occasions; Currie Cup finals in South Africa generate fantastic interest and even though I played only seven Tests, one was against New Zealand and another against Western Samoa in a very emotional World Cup quarter-final. Twickenham has a tradition of its own, though, and I'm honoured to be involved in this match."

Saracens freely admit that Johnson will be difficult to replace, especially now that they have abandoned any thought of shelling out mega-bucks for Tim Stimpson, the disaffected Test Lion from Newcastle. "It's up to Gavin, but he knows how highly we rate him," said Mark Evans, the director of rugby, this week. "You've seen something approaching the best of him in recent weeks and when he plays at that level, he's the Real McCoy."

Evans can rest assured that for today, at least, his prize full-back is more concerned with the big game at Twickenham than the big game back home. After that, who knows? Certainly not Johnson.

Posed of three Premiership One sides en route to the final, they will start as firm favourites against Adam Roxburgh's Border raiders. But Metcalfe, despite his obvious self-belief, is wary of raising expectations too high: "We have scored some nice tries this season and won games well, but it is a totally different ball game going into a final like this," he said. "I played a couple of games at Murrayfield two years ago in the district championship... but this will be the biggest game I have played at club level for the Hawks."

For the coach, Bruce Rutherford, who has also steered the club to the brink of the top flight via next Saturday's play-off against Heriot's FPR, the cup run has been a welcome bonus: "I would rather win the one the following week to be honest – that is the one we have been working all season for," he admitted. "But now that we are there, we will go out to give it our best shot before thinking about Heriot's."

"The deal underpins the efforts of the England team while

recognising the club-based nature of rugby in this country," said Smith. "We went in with a positive attitude and while it's fair to say that we've had our moments of discord, we've come out with a positive agreement."

As expected, England's Premiership clubs will boycott next year's Heineken Cup. The Allied Dunbar top flight will accommodate 14 teams next season and professional players will operate under standard contracts featuring built-in release dates for international rugby – a move certain to infuriate Cliff Brindle, the marginalised RFU chairman, and his major ally, Fran Cotton, who has already set the wheels in motion for a special general meeting in the summer.

Cotton will be positively apoplectic at the RFU's decision to turn its back on provincial

rugby, the resurrection of which he has turned into a crusade. He will almost certainly claim that the clubs have won to the detriment of rugby worldwide.

However, the clubs have made significant concessions on key issues. Full England players – that is to say, those involved in Test squads – will play no more than 37 games a season and to that end, Premiership rugby will be played on or around international weekends. Never before have the clubs accepted the principle of playing important games without their leading lights.

"We've also ensured that there will be no Premiership closed shop; there will always be promotion and relegation," said Smith, whose quiet and restrained approach made him a key figure in the wheeling and dealing. Next season, Bedford and West Harlepool will join the elite while London Scottish and Rotherham will accompany them if they triumph in their respective play-off matches with Bristol and London Irish.

Crucially, the clubs have agreed to make the deal unchallengeable for seven years. Even if the European Commission comes down in favour of the clubs' application on constitutional and commercial rights this autumn, its findings will not be brought to bear on the running of the domestic game. Smith and his colleagues must now sell the deal to a hostile and reactionary International Rugby Board in Dublin on 18 May. Until then, the 12 clubs who make up the existing Premiership top flight remain banned, albeit controversially, from playing contact with any side outside of England.

By Bryn Palmer

THE Glasgow Hawks full-back Glenn Metcalfe will take centre stage at Murrayfield today as the Second Division champions aim to cap a remarkable first season with a Teneants' Velvett Cup triumph over Kelso.

But it surely will not be the last time the New Zealanders enjoy top billing at the national stadium as a first Scotland cap beckons ever closer with each new try. The 26-year-old former Waikato provincial player could achieve that goal when he returns to the southern hemisphere as part of the tour party heading for Fiji and Australia later this month.

Before that, however, lies the challenge of helping the Hawks soar to even greater heights. Runaway winners of their own division with weeks to spare and having already comfortably dis-

posed of three Premiership

One sides en route to the final,

they will start as firm favourites

against Adam Roxburgh's

Border raiders.

But Metcalfe, despite his

obvious self-belief, is wary of

raising expectations too high:

# Redknapp ready to serve club and country

## Football

By Paul Walker

JAMIE REDKNAPP will sign a new five-year contract with Liverpool next week – and tell Glenn Hoddle that he is fit for England World Cup duty.

The Liverpool manager, Roy Evans, will also sit down next week for contract talks with Steve McManaman in an attempt to end the saga over whether the winger will stay or leave when his current deal runs out at the end of next season.

Redknapp is a week away from full fitness after struggling with a knee injury since the draw at Coventry last month, and will be absent again at Derby on Sunday in Liverpool's final press statement yesterday.

### Chelsea and Stuttgart caught in quandary over Uefa Cup

CHELSEA are set to defend the Cup-Winners' Cup next season if they lift the trophy on Wednesday – despite hints that they could opt out. That means Blackburn, Leicester, West Ham, Aston Villa or Derby could sneak into Europe after all – even if they finish outside the Premiership top six.

The suggestion that Gianluca Vialli's side could take part in the Uefa Cup even if they beat VfB Stuttgart in next week's Stockholm final came after senior officials of Uefa, European football's governing body, faxed the German club. Like Chelsea, who are Coca-Cola Cup winners and likely to finish fourth in the Premiership, Stuttgart – poised to earn a top-six Bundesliga spot – will also earn a place in the Uefa Cup.

The correspondence from Uefa suggested that Stuttgart would be given the option of choosing which competition to play in, an offer which would also be made to Chelsea if they triumphed in the Rasunda Stadium. With the Uefa Cup containing an extra money-spinning round, Stuttgart's president, Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder, had been reported to be asking Bundesliga rivals to chip in money to compensate his club for playing in the Cup-Winners' Cup instead.

Confusion reigned at Uefa's Swiss headquarters yesterday, with different officials sending divergent signals over what the regulations stated. If Chelsea do win, and defend the trophy, that is set to consider the matter along with several other points at its 8 June congress in Paris – two days before the World Cup finals begin.

Chelsea's managing director, Colin Hutchinson, said: "The evidence of everything we've heard from them is that we would be required to defend the Cup-Winners' Cup, because Uefa ranks it second only to the Champions' League in importance."

### Rangers left to hope Old Firm rivals blow last chance

By Phil Gordon

JONATHAN GOULD has kept a low profile all season, so the Celtic goalkeeper has to be listened to when he claims Rangers are dabbling in a flight of fancy.

The Scottish champions have tried to turn up the psychological pressure on the other half of the Old Firm by ensuring a helicopter is kept on stand-by today to whisk them back to Glasgow if they beat Dundee United and Celtic lose, a combination of results which would present Rangers with a record 10th title in a row.

Ibrox is playing host to 32,000 fans watching events from Tannadice unfold on giant screens and one-upmanship has enticed them into their bold aerial gesture.

However, Gould, whose meagre total of just 24 goals conceded has played a crucial part in Celtic being in the brink of their first title since 1988, be-

lieves that a victory for the Premier Division leaders against St Johnstone at Parkhead will bring their eternal rivals crashing back to earth.

"You have to be very careful when you do things the way Rangers have this week," bristled Gould, leaving no doubt that it has supplied the motivation, if any more were needed. "Put it this way, I would be pretty disappointed if I didn't have a championship medal by Saturday night."

More than 52,000 fans will pack Parkhead to see if Wim Jansen's team can protect their two-point advantage over Rangers. The Dutch coach remains unfazed by all the hype, saying: "We know what we have to do. We don't have to rely on anyone else, only ourselves."

Rangers believed their championship ambitions were dead after they lost to Kilmarnock last week until Dunfermline offered them a reprieve 24 hours later.

## Sporting Digest

### Dalton stretches the pack

Sailing

THE lead pair of Grant Dalton in Merit Cup and Paul Standbridge in Toshiba were stretching away from the chasing pack yesterday as both the temperature and the wind dropped on the eighth leg of the Whitbread race from Annapolis to La Rochelle, writes Stuart Alexander.

Over 90 miles covered by the first-placed Dalton to last-

placed John Kostecki in Chessie Racing.

Still enjoying a successful leg is the all-woman crew of EF Education, holding fourth position behind Kazut Frostad's Innovation Kvaerner and positively relishing the opportunity of sighting an iceberg. Overall leader Paul Cayard was languishing unhappily 38 miles behind Merit in sixth place.

### Baiul in alcohol clinic

Ice skating

OKSANA BAIUL, the 1994 Olympic women's figure skating champion, has entered a rehabilitation clinic to treat a chronic alcohol problem, a spokesman has said.

Baiul, the 21-year-old Ukrainian, agreed to seek treatment last week, according to a spokesman for her New York publicity agency.

Police said Baiul was driving drunk last year after a car accident near Hartford, Connecticut, in which her car skidded off the road after travelling at speeds above 100 mph.

Baiul, who was then under the state's legal drinking age, did not contest a reduced charge and part of her sentence included entering an alcohol education programme.

NBA CONFERENCE PLAYOFFS (best-of-seven): Eastern Conference – Boston 2, Atlanta 7; New Jersey 2, Orlando 5; Western Conference semi-final: Utah 20, San Antonio 10 (OT) (Utah lead 2-0).

Boxing

WBO super-middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe must surgery on his right eye after a cut to the left eye forced him to withdraw from his defence of the title against Juan Carlos Gimenez at Cardiff last month, but he gambled on the injury not preventing him from fighting. But the injury has not cleared up and an operation may be necessary.

Queens Park Rangers have partied with replacement manager John Holling as Loftus Road manager Ray Harford restructures his club. Nottingham Forest are giving a trial to two French midfield players, Stephane Roche and Etienne Mende.

### Athletics

DOHA GRAND PRIX (Qatar) Winne:

Marc 100m: D Bailey (Can) 10.07sec; 200m:

R Clay (USA) 20.08sec; 400m: M McDonald

4x100m: 1 USA (D Bailey, R Clay, M McDonald, J Gobin) 43.02; 1 Japan (K Ueda, T Yamada, T Yamamoto, T Ueda) 43.02; 100m H: M Johnson (USA) 10.27; 110m H: M Johnson (USA) 13.27; 1500m: M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 1500m H: M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; Pole vault: 1 S Bubka (Ukr) 5.90m; High jump: 1 C Price (USA) 2.29m; Long jump: 1 S Johnson (USA) 8.00m; Discus: 1 M Johnson (USA) 63.94m; Shot put: 1 M Johnson (USA) 18.27m; Javelin: 1 M Johnson (USA) 83.20m; 800m: 1 M Johnson (USA) 1:59.00; 1500m: 1 M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 100m: 1 M McDonald (USA) 10.09sec; 400m: 1 T Price (USA) 48.00sec; 1500m: 1 M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 100m H: 1 M Johnson (USA) 13.27m; 110m H: 1 M Johnson (USA) 13.27m; 1500m H: 1 M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 1500m: 1 M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 100m: 1 M Johnson (USA) 10.09sec; 200m: 1 M McDonald (USA) 20.08sec; 400m: 1 M McDonald (USA) 43.02; 1500m: 1 M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 100m H: 1 M Johnson (USA) 13.27m; 110m H: 1 M Johnson (USA) 13.27m; 1500m H: 1 M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 1500m: 1 M Johnson (USA) 3:49.26; 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# Everton circus faces the Big Drop

The legacy of a power struggle at Goodison has sapped the team's ability to compete. Glenn Moore on the slide of a great club

THOSE Everton fans who watched enviously as Arsenal, having humiliated their team, carried the Premiership trophy around Highbury last week will be able to savour their own silverware parade at Goodison Park tomorrow.

But while a championship trophy and a cup will be on display, the afternoon is more likely to end in a mournful wake than a celebratory party as their club tries to avoid a unique treble.

Last month Everton ladies won the Women's Premier League, on Thursday the teenagers won the FA Youth Cup. Tomorrow the first team are favourites to be relegated from the top division for the first time in 47 years. Founder members of the League, champions in seven different decades and nine times in all, Everton have only missed four top-flight seasons in 110 years. Should they go down they will be the biggest name to be relegated since Manchester United in 1974.

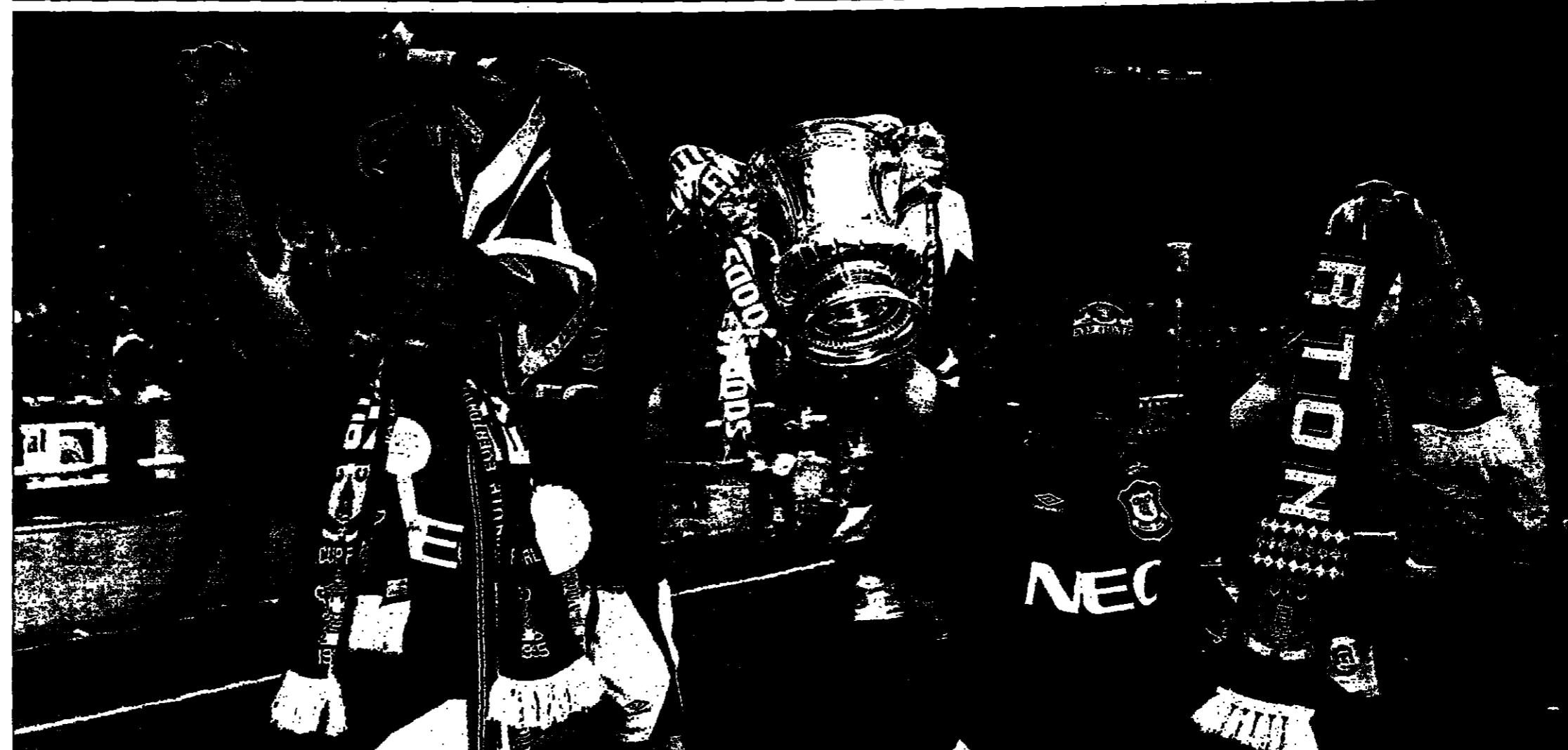
To avoid the drop they need to gain a point more against Coventry at Goodison than Bolton Wanderers can achieve against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge. That might seem feasible but take into account Chelsea's preoccupation with their European Cup-Winners' Cup final, and Everton's vulnerability against the sort of pace Darren Huckerby has in abundance, and next season's local derby will probably be against Tranmere rather than Liverpool.

There was the usual talk, at Everton's suburban training ground this week, about "fighting to the last", but the mood is subdued rather than bullish reflecting the defeatism prevalent on the blue half of Merseyside. Though the team will still run out to the theme from *Z Cars* another by-gone anthem, Abba's "SOS", would be more appropriate.

The fans, though turning up in impressive numbers, are in despair. Six years of near-continual struggle has worn them down as it has the team. Some wonder whether relegation might prove a springboard for a new start but more look at the many parallels at Manchester City and fear a loss of status could be terminal.

Like City, who also have a dominant neighbour, Everton have endured boardroom and management upheaval resulting in a lack of direction. Many of the problems stem from the post-Heysel ban on English clubs. As domestic champions and European Cup-Winners' Cup holders in 1985 Everton fancied their chances in the European Cup. Instead Howard Kendall, frustrated at being unable to test himself abroad, soon left for Spain. Gary Lineker followed. Trevor Steven and Gary Stevens went to Rangers and the team broke up.

The 1987 title was their last League success and, by 1992, the club was fighting relegation. The Moores family, long the guiding influence, decided to sell their controlling stake in the club precipitating a lengthy power struggle between Peter Johnson, a local foodstuffs millionaire, chairman of Tranmere and former Liverpool season ticket-holder, and Bill Kenwright, the West End theatre impresario and lifelong Evertonian. Kenwright was the fans' choice. Johnson had the money. Eventually they did a deal with Johnson, for £20m, becoming chairman and ma-



Ups and downs: Paul Rideout (left, immediately above) and Joe Parkinson hold FA Cup after 1995 defeat of Manchester United; (top left) Howard Kendall (in grey suit) watches his side's 4-0 humiliation at Highbury last Sunday; (top right, left to right) Michael Ball, Slaven Bilic and Nick Barmby have that sinking feeling in the 3-1 home defeat to Sheffield Wednesday on 25 April

Photographs: Empics

jority shareholder and Kenwright staying on the board.

Initially this seemed to work. Johnson provided the finance to sign the likes of Daniel Amokachi and Duncan Ferguson and, after the popular Joe Royle replaced Mike Walker, Everton won the FA Cup. Further investment brought in Andrei Kanchelskis, Nick Barmby and Gary Speed but the team failed to gel. Royle fell out with the local media and, after Johnson refused to add to the huge transfer deficit by signing Tore Andre Flo, Royle jumped.

Dave Watson steered the team to safety as player/caretaker manager and the summer opened with Johnson promising big names. Slaven Bilic arrived but no player of note joined him while Kendall returned for his third spell as manager only after Johnson suffered a series of rejections elsewhere.

By now Johnson, having spent nearly £40m on transfers in four years, had tired of putting money into the club. As his proposal to move from Goodison to an out-of-town site met vociferous and informed opposition he became a tax exile on J-

sey where he contemplates cashing in on his investment – worth an estimated £50-£70m.

Johnson's public utterances are now rare, his opposition to the signing of John Spencer – after the player had undergone heart surgery to prove his fitness – being an uncommon revelation. Kendall, whose last spell at Goodison ended when the board refused to sanction a £1.5m bid for Dion Dublin, got his way over Spencer but he has still spent barely £1.1m in signing 13 players, most from the Nationwide or Central

Leagues. With nine players departing he has even made a small profit.

The turnover – of 18 players signed by Walker and Royle only three are in the team – means this is largely Kendall's side but the weaknesses of last year, a lack of pace in defence, guile in midfield and goals in attack, are yet to be solved. Instability has not helped – he has used 34 players – nor have problems with the senior men: Ferguson has played with an injury for months and, while still a handful, understandably lacks

sharpness; Bilic has been sent off three times; Barmby has been fitful.

More than 15,000 turned up at Goodison this week to clutch at the strands of hope provided by the youth team but Everton do not have a good record of bringing on young players. Their last FA Youth Cup winning side, in 1984, had a negligible impact, making only 22 Everton appearances between them. Only Ian Marshall, now at Leicester, went on to forge a decent career. More recently none of several promising players have established

themselves: John Ebbrell and Jon O'Connor have already been sold while Tony Grant and Michael Branch have been unable to gain a regular first-team place.

The new generation, led by Michael Ball, Gavin McCann, Richard Dunne and Danny Cadamarteri, look good; but it is easier to bed into a winning team than a losing one. Last week, after the home defeat to Sheffield Wednesday which, together with Bolton's win at Aston Villa, plunged the club towards relegation, Kendall pointedly criticised the lack of help the older players gave the youngsters.

Many fans have now lost faith in Kendall but, because of the enormous goodwill for his past deeds as player and manager, the bulk of their ire is aimed at Johnson. There were further demonstrations against him after Thursday's match and he will be given a four-man police guard from his Wulfrun home to Goodison – where precautions include removing the brass name plate identifying his office.

Johnson has never been forgiven his Liverpool links and banners like

the one at Anfield on Wednesday – "Agent Johnson: Mission accomplished" – do not help. Due to the unique relationship between Merseyside fans, an element of the Liverpool support would like to see Everton survive. But that did not stop chants of "come on Bolton" and "going down" on Wednesday.

The team have been given impressive support though the anger some fans showed at Highbury, when the players waved distantly at the travelling support rather than going across to them, suggests that, too, is fragile.

Everton had plenty of spirit at Highbury but, because of the cohesion and ability to match Coventry, so often cast in Everton's position on final day, have the beating of them, as they showed in thrashing them 4-1 in the Coca-Cola Cup earlier this season.

After that match Kendall, appalled at their lack of pride in his beloved club, argued with his players on the pitch. Everton went on to defeat Liverpool in their next match.

The reprimand will be just as bitter if they fail tomorrow but stone-men will not be so close at hand.



Phillips: Local boy who finally became a local hero

It was, to coin a phrase, just like watching Brazil.

Phillips' first goal in four years was also a timely reminder to the management that his testimonial match, against Celtic, need not be his farewell.

Before he considers whether it is time to get on his bike, Bolton must stop the cycle of the euphoric rise followed by the instant fall. Make-or-break tomorrow beckons.

## 'Jiminho' ready for another day of reckoning

IF A WEEK is a long time in politics then a decade in football is an eternity. Consider the changing fortunes since the Football League's centenary year of two founder members, Bolton Wanderers and Everton, and especially those of Bolton's Jimmy Phillips.

In 1988, when Bolton went into the season's last day needing to win at Wrexham to claim the final automatic promotion place from the old Fourth Division, Phillips could only watch from a distance. A year earlier he had been sold to Rangers to finance a futile attempt to stay up.

That same May, Everton, still nominally the League champions, were looking wistfully towards the European Cup final between Benfica and PSV Eindhoven and wondering what might have been. Among the few Englishmen to beat the post-Heysel ban that season had been Phillips, who was in Rangers' rearguard when they

won in Kiev before a gathering of 100,000.

The narrowest of wins in Wales launched Bolton on the first step of what proved to be a rapid rise through the divisions.

A similar success at Chelsea tomorrow would not only ensure their Premiership survival, but also negate any victory Everton might achieve at home to Coventry.

One of the great "Super League" advocates would thus be relegated for the first time since Winston Churchill held the other premiership in 1951.

From Bolton's point of view, the drama is about more than a Lancashire town team striving to consolidate among the corporate élite and, indeed, sending one of their number down in the process.

Since they last tried to put down roots at the highest level, a one-season blunder in 1995-96, they have crossed the Rubicon (or rather the boundary with Horwich). After 102

years at Burnden Park, a real state-of-the-art venue, they built the state-of-the-art Reebok Stadium.

Initially, the outcome of their struggle with Everton will be measured in human terms.

Years will flow and hearts grow heavy. But for Bolton, who spent £35m on constructing a futuristic home for the new millennium, the cost of failure would also be counted in concrete, steel and plastic.

If they were to slip into the club and their traditions, Bolton are not Sunderland. The gleaming white citadel just off the M61 could become a white elephant.

Not that Colin Todd and his team are thinking negatively. They have won four of the last eight matches and are scoring freely. What is more, the fixtures seem to be falling into place nicely. Having received Crystal Palace five days after they were officially doomed, and duly dispatched them 5-2, Bolton sat back and watched Everton being taken apart at Arsenal's championship party.

Arduous though a finale at fourth-placed Chelsea may appear, their destiny is now in their own hands. Moreover, the London club's recent performances have led to Howard Kendall, the

Everton manager, accusing them of playing "with their flip-flops on".

Kendall was no doubt trying to use a little psychology. Alex Ferguson-style. Nevertheless, his comments betray the not unreasonable fear that Chelsea will be soft-pedalling to conserve their energies for the Cup-Winners' Cup final 72 hours later.

Bolton's scramble for safety has seen it all since being taken on as an apprentice 15 years ago. When he made his full debut for the Wanderers, on the first day of 1984-85, only 4,400 were at Burnden to see it.

Then there is Bob Taylor, a striker deemed surplus to West Bromwich Albion's requirements a division lower. As costly recruits like the £3m Dean

Holdsworth have struggled to provide the requisite support for Nathan Blake, Taylor has contributed vital goals during two loan spells.

The player who has emerged as Bolton's most prized asset is the £5m-rated Alan Thompson, a Geordie midfielder with a lethal left foot. Yet there is no better symbol of the club's spirit and resilience than the one member of the squad actually born in the town, the same Jim Phillips.

The attacking left-back has produced some unlikely heroes. The defender Neil Cox picked Aston Villa, his former club, as the scene for his first goal for the club. It set up a surprise win which revived hope after defeat by Derby and Leeds.

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via Oxford and Middlesbrough, they were pushing for the Premiership under Bruce Rioch and Todd.

Last year, having been through two promotions and one demotion, he appeared to be on the way out when Todd bought first Robbie Elliott and then Mike Whittle to play in his position. Phillips, 32, could have left but decided he would rather be involved peripherally at Bolton than regularly in the lower echelons.

Then both newcomers succumbed to long-term injuries, and he came back to share, nay star, in Bolton's spring revival.

Such has been the panache with which he has played that the fans who were barracking him last autumn have dubbed him "Jiminho".

When Bolton were struggling at 2-2 against Palace, he chested down a pass, swivelled and scored with a textbook half-volley to ease the tension.

Before he considers whether it is time to get on his bike, Bolton must stop the cycle of the euphoric rise followed by the instant fall. Make-or-break tomorrow beckons.

Colin Todd's side take on Chelsea with their Premiership status at stake tomorrow. Phil Shaw on a recurring cycle of rise and fall

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## Dave Jones is proof you don't have to be a big name to get on



**OLIVIA BLAIR**  
SINGS THE PRAISES OF SOME OF FOOTBALL'S UNSUNG HEROES

SO after 272 days, 6,488 hours and more 90 minutes than most of us can to remember, it is almost all over bar the shouting (of which there will doubtless be a lot done during next week's Cup-Winners' Cup final, not to mention the play-offs). In truth, of course, this is the longest-ever football season, since there is hardly time to draw breath before the World Cup kicks off. But domestically, at least, the final whistle is nigh.

It has been business as usual this season. Bans and brawls, drink and drugs, friendlies and not-so-friendlies, injuries and comebacks, binnings and firings (42 managers got their marching orders) have all played their part. There have been highs and lows, successes and failures, winners and losers, heroes and villains.

And, of course, there have been unsung heroes.

It's a term normally applied, with all due respect, to football's unglamorous stars; the likes of Martin Keown, the Garys - Pilkington and Mabbett - and Carlton Palmer. But, in fact, football has more unsung heroes than most walks of life, and the following spring immediately to mind.

Never mind "Arsène Who?", it was "John Who?" when Gregory was taken off the Aston Villa reins from Brian Little, steering them quietly but quickly clear of the relegation danger. Down on the south coast, meanwhile, Southampton fans must be suffering from vertigo. More accustomed to peering down the relegation trap door, they've been craning their necks to-

wards Europe. Dave Jones won't be scared of the heights, having led Stockport to lofty perches last season but, like Gregory, he is proof that you don't have to be a big name to get on in this game.

Ditto Frank Sinclair who, despite his Jamaican connections, was the poor relation in Chelsea's jet-set squad. Yet his strike broke the deadlock in the Coca-Cola Cup final, just as his equaliser against Real Betis in the Cup Winners' Cup quarter-final sparked Chelsea's fightback. Sinclair was once the laughing stock of Stamford Bridge. Not so now.

Jason Lee knows all about being a laughing stock, but the man who once achieved unwanted notoriety for having a haircut the shape of a fruit that goes well with gammon had the last laugh this season;

it was his goal against Fulham that ultimately won Watford the Second Division championship.

Gary Jones' 28 goals have helped Notts County run away with the Third Division while goals from the veteran Steve Wood have been instrumental in ensuring Macclesfield's meteoric climb into the Second Division behind County.

It's been a forgettable season for Manchester City fans, but their loyalty has been an unforgettable as that of the Clydebank fans. The Bankies could win promotion from the Scottish Second Division today, but the fans have put long-term gain before short-term glory and stayed away in protest at the directors' handling of the club's affairs.

Bobble has off too to Charlton, who have proved that small budget

doesn't always equal small ambition; to Stockport, Crewe and Bury, who have shown that what comes up does not always have to go down again; to Jim Jefferies and his Hearts side, who came close to breaking the Old Firm domination in Scotland; to the West Ham board, whose faith in Harry Redknapp is at last starting to pay dividends; to undefeated League of Wales champions, Barry Town; to Channel 5, who were bold enough to broadcast England's World Cup qualifier against Poland and Chelsea's European run (only for the BBC to poach the final); to Northern League side Tow Law Town, for reaching Wembley for the first time in their history (they play Tiverton Town in the FA Vase final today); to Everton's director of

youth coaching, Colin Harvey, for winning the FA Youth Cup (at least there's hope for Goodison's future); to Arsenal's Groundsmen of the Year, Steve Braddock, who won Highbury's first title of the season in April; and to Barnsley - down, but by never forgotten.

And with the World Cup in mind, we should perhaps applaud an unsung hero in the shape of the Italian striker, Christian Vieri, whose misplaced header in Rome ensured England's passage to France. And on a final note let's not forget the England World Cup song, "On Top Of The World". Early signs are that it's unlikely to be afforded the heroic status of its predecessor, "Three Lions". In fact, it's more likely to remain - by the fans, at least - unsung.

by Nick Harris

## Premiership team news

## Aston Villa v Arsenal

Yorks 15 Leading scorer Bergkamp 22 Last season: 2-2

The Aston Villa midfielder Ian Taylor will almost certainly miss tomorrow's game with a thigh problem. Lee Hendrie, also taken off against Wednesday with a calf strain, should be fit to return in the midfield against Arsène Wenger's title-winning side. Goalkeeper Mark Bosnich is hoping to reclaim his place from Michael Oakes after a bout of flu. Villa are definitely without defenders Steve Staunton and Riccardo Scimeca, who both have hamstring injuries. Simon Grayson may move forward from defence to replace Taylor. Arsenal will have almost a full-strength team after Emmanuel Petit and Dutch winger Marc Overmars both passed fitness tests. With the title already won, manager Arsène Wenger rested six key players in midweek while Petit was out with a shin injury and Overmars nursing a damaged ankle. Wenger recalls Tony Adams, David Seaman, Martin Keown, Patrick Vieira, Nigel Winterburn and Nicolas Anelka. Ian Wright is likely to lead the attack alongside Anelka, with Liberian Chris Wreh on the substitutes' bench. The only significant omission will be the injured Dutchman, Dennis Bergkamp.

## Barnsley v Manchester Utd

Redeem 4 Leading scorer Cole 24 Last season: No fixture

Danny Wilson has a full Barnsley squad to choose from his team's last Premiership match before their return to the Nationwide League. With no injury worries, Wilson can call on the services of the Macedonian international striker Georgi Hristov and central defender Chris Morgan. Both players are available again after completing three and five-match bans respectively. Barnsley have conceded 80 Premiership goals this season, 33 of them at home. Despite a brief rally earlier in the year, they have picked up only one point from the last 12. Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson will make several changes tomorrow to give games to some of his fringe players. Henning Berg, John Curtis, Michael Oakes and Philip McHale are all likely to start. Raimond van der Gouw will continue in goal in place of Peter Schmeichel, who is troubled with his hamstring injury. Ole Gunnar Solskjær is suspended and Ronny Johnsen is recovering from his cartilage operation. Brian McClair could make an emotional final League start for United after being told his Old Trafford days are over.

## Blackburn v Newcastle

Galagher 20 Leading scorer Shearer, Barnes 7 Last season: 1-0

Billy McKinlay is available to help Blackburn attempt to secure their place in next season's Uefa Cup. The Scottish midfielder, who has been in doubt all week with an ankle injury, has been passed fit. Damien Duff will also be involved after coming through a check on an injured groin but captain Tim Sherrwood has an ankle problem and will not play again this season. Manager Roy Hodgson must decide between goalkeepers John Filan, who has started the last three games, and fit-again Tim Flowers. Jeff Kenna played in an unfamiliar wing-back position last week but is likely to revert to full back at the expense of either Gary Croft or Patrick Valery. Kenny Dalglish will put out his strongest Newcastle side for the final Premiership game of the season, rejecting any notions he may play a weakened side with the FA Cup final against Arsenal less than a week away. Captain Rob Lee and defender Steve Howe have both responded well to treatment on their respective foot and calf injuries and should both start. The only member of the squad unlikely to be available is Darren Peacock, who has a calf injury.

## Chelsea v Bolton

Vallis 19 Leading scorer Blake 14 Last season: No fixture

Frank Leboeuf has made an unexpected return from an ankle injury. He picked up the injury in last week's 3-1 defeat at Newcastle, but played 45 minutes in Kevin Hitchcock's testimonial against Nottingham Forest in midweek and is confident of being fit. Franco Zola continues to receive treatment in Italy on a grueling problem. Captain Dennis Wise has a toe injury. Michael D. is struggling to recover from an ankle problem. Graeme Le Saux has a calf strain and defender Andy Myers has a back problem. Bolton's player of the year, Andy Todd, could miss out on playing in tomorrow's relegation decider, because his father, manager Col in Todd, will not pick him. The defender is likely to be left on the bench. Todd Sr is expected to stick with Gerry Taggart - who came in when his son served a one-match ban - and kept his place as Bolton won their last two games. Bolton face worries over strikers Dean Holdsworth and Bob Taylor, who both face fitness tests on hamstring injuries ahead of the biggest day of their season.

## Crystal Palace v Sheff Wed

Dyer 8 Leading scorer Di Canio 14 Last season: No fixture

Crystal Palace are likely to be without their French defender Véronique Ismael for their final Premiership game of the season (and of the near future). Ismael was injured in Tuesday's 3-3 draw with West Ham and that might mean ex-Wolves defender Jamie Smith coming in as right wing-back and captain Marc Edwards switching into the middle. The England Under-21 and B squad striker Matt Jansen, who has made such an impression since joining from Carlisle earlier this season, could return from injury. Palace have won two of their last five League games and drawn one. Sheffield Wednesday's Ron Atkinson is likely to give his promising 19-year-old striker Francesco Sanetti his first start at Crystal Palace tomorrow. Sanetti made a stunning debut when coming on as a substitute in a 3-1 defeat at home to Aston Villa last weekend, scoring the Owls' consolation goal as well as hitting the woodwork. The Italian will play alongside compatriot Paolo Di Canio as Andy Booth is out through suspension following his dismissal against Everton two weeks ago. Wednesday have won one game in their last five.

## ...And statistics

## Sunderland lead the way as gates soar



Middlesbrough's Paul Merson (right) takes on Stockport's Martin McIntosh. Despite their relegation from the Premiership last year, Middlesbrough have continued to fill the Riverside Stadium every week, while Stockport saw their gates rise this season by nearly 30 per cent

While football's resources have become increasingly concentrated on the Premiership in recent years, the game outside the top flight in England and Wales is also thriving.

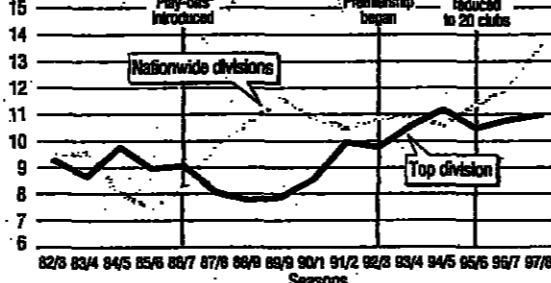
The three divisions beneath the Premiership enjoyed their best attendances this season for more than a quarter of a century. Crowds in the Nationwide League rose by 13.2 per cent on last season to reach a level not seen since the 1971-72 season.

The biggest rise was in the First Division, where crowds rose by 20.1 per cent to an average of 15,079. Although the major boost was provided by the division's biggest clubs (Sunderland, in a season following relegation, saw an increase of 64 per cent after their move to a new stadium), there were also increases in some unexpected quarters. Even Reading, the bottom club, enjoyed an increase of more than five per cent.

The Second Division average was up by nearly nine per cent, though the Third Division showed a small drop.

## The returning millions

Football League attendances 1982-1997



## Nationwide League attendances 1997-98

First Division

	Avg gate 1997-98	Avg gate 1996-97	Per cent change	League position
Sheffield United	11,220	10,902	+3.0	1
West Ham	11,535	10,894	+6.0	2
Notts County	10,725	10,653	+0.7	3
Reading	9,450	9,411	+0.5	4
Sheffield Wednesday	9,044	8,954	+1.0	5
Southend	7,723	7,743	-0.3	6
Walsall	7,659	7,659	0.0	7
Blackpool	6,813	6,880	+10.0	8
Wigan	6,592	6,592	0.0	9
Luton	5,779	6,781	-13.3	10
Derby	5,765	5,765	0.0	11
Wrexham	5,414	5,222	+3.5	12
Cardiff	5,395	5,400	-0.1	13
Plymouth	5,223	6,465	-18.0	22
Sheffield United	5,169	5,169	0.0	1
Stockport	5,112	4,867	+4.5	12
Doncaster	5,067	5,067	0.0	21
Cheltenham	4,749	4,639	+2.4	10
Nottingham Forest	4,705	4,591	+2.7	9
Southend	4,402	5,072	-17.2	24
Wrexham	4,300	4,112	+4.5	7
Walsall	4,082	3,892	+4.4	19
Wigan	3,938	3,899	+1.0	11
York	3,853	3,359	+14.7	16
<b>Overall</b>	<b>5,291</b>	<b>5,291</b>	<b>+0.0</b>	<b>24</b>

	Avg gate 1997-98	Avg gate 1996-97	Per cent change	League position
Peterborough	5,195	5,205	-2.0	19
Notts County	5,725	4,238	+35.1	1
Walsall	5,702	5,431	+4.7	22
Leeds	4,388	4,336	+1.2	11
Sheffield Wednesday	4,017	3,183	+27.0	13
Exeter	3,914	3,014	+32.4	15
Derby	3,897	3,405	+13.0	14
Nottingham Forest	3,879	3,400	+13.0	16
Cardiff	3,574	3,594	-0.6	21
Wigan	3,546	3,294	+9.3	20
Doncaster	3,148	3,245	-3.1	4
Sheffield Wednesday	3,098	2,987	+3.7	6
Nottingham Forest	2,905	1,407	+105.5	2
Derby	2,890	2,869	+0.4	15
Nottingham Forest	2,720	2,222	+22.2	12
Southend	2,679	2,380	+13.8	5
Sheffield Wednesday	2,465	2,455	+4.1	6
Sheffield Wednesday	2,402	2,125	+13.4	18
Wigan	2,395	2,265	+14.7	10
Nottingham Forest	2,256	2,045	+10.4	23
Sheffield Wednesday	2,256	2,263	-0.3	14
Sheffield Wednesday	2,241	2,107	+6.4	17
Nottingham Forest	2,084	1,923	+3.2	18
Southend	1,715	2,087	-18.0	24
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3,107</b>	<b>2,921</b>	<b>+6.9</b>	<b>24</b>

	Avg gate 1997-98	Avg gate 1996-97	Per cent change	League position
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# YOUR MONEY

Personal finance, motoring and property

Saturday 9 May 1998

## Hitting the tourist trail

Travellers heading off the beaten track this summer face a fourfold rise in travel insurance. Paul Slade reports on a little noticed tax hike

A holiday off the beaten track is a dream for millions of travellers who don't wish to undergo the regimented experience of package trips abroad. Increasing numbers of holidaymakers achieve that dream. Yet, thanks to a little-noticed measure announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in his last Budget, those of us who avoid package tours will face a fourfold rise in tax on our travel insurance this summer. One in five travellers will be hit.

The tax hike on travel insurance hits cover bought from brokers or banks. The tax added to your premiums when you buy from these outlets rises from 4 per cent to 17.5 per cent on 1 August.

The change will bring the Treasury extra tax of just £15m in a full year. But experts warn that, for the most part, it is holidaymakers who must pay the price. Robert Smith of Douglas Cox Tyrie (DCT), a firm of brokers, says: "Certainly, our insurers are not going to be able to carry it. And, with such a big difference from 4 per cent to 17.5 per cent, there's no way we can absorb it either."

On DCT's estimates, the rise means a family of two adults and three children planning a 17-day trip outside Europe will pay £115.55 instead of the current £102.25 for their cover.

Travel insurance will pay out if you lose your belongings while on holiday, have your holiday delayed, or have to cancel for reasons beyond your own control. But by far the most important element is that it will pay your medical bills if you fall sick or have an accident while abroad. This is particularly valuable outside the European Union, where you will not be able to rely on reciprocal

### The cost of travel insurance

	Europe	Worldwide
Single Trip cover (17 days)		
Two adults:	£79.90	£129.90
Two adults and three children:	£189.79	£278.04
Two adults, one over 65:	£79.90*	£154.44

Going Places premium rates, showing current travel agents' tax rate of 17.5 per cent. Excludes ski cover. Assumes children are aged 12 or younger.

\* Premium may be higher for those over 70

Source: Going Places

arrangements between your host country and the NHS.

Paul Sparks, of TSB General, the general insurance arm that is part of Lloyds Bank/TSB Group, says: "If you're abroad and you become sick or injured, without travel insurance, you can be financially ruined. I think it's something most people will still feel they have to have, but they will not be happy they've got to pay this extra tax."

If you are a frequent traveller, and buy insurance cover for a whole year at a time, it may make sense to buy your next policy before 1 August to lock in your cover at the lower rate for the next 12 months.

Smith says up to 20 per cent of travellers buy their insurance from banks or brokers, and that these buyers tend to be independent-minded. "Perhaps they're bored with the average package holiday, and looking for something a little bit different," he says. "They're fairly streetwise, and used to shopping around."

The increase in tax puts these travellers on the same footing as people buying from travel agents and tour operators, where premiums have been taxed at 17.5 per cent since 1 April, 1997. Their rate of tax was increased to combat what Customs & Excise saw as creative accounting.

Travel agents often sell a holiday and the associated insurance as a single package. The tax rate payable on travel insurance premiums in 1996 was just 2.5 per cent, as against the 17.5 per cent VAT charged on the holiday element of the package. Customs believed tour operators were loading much of the total transaction on to the insurance side of the books in order to save tax.

The 1996 Conservative Budget therefore increased the insurance premium tax rate to 17.5 per cent for these outlets, bringing it into line with VAT. The standard rate of tax on insurance premiums rose from 2.5 per cent to 4 per cent.

Mike Beaumont of Thomas Cook says: "The Customs & Excise argument was that we were value-shifting as an industry. We never felt that was the case, so we are very pleased it has been equalised now." But the end result has been to give Mr Brown a perfect excuse to raise the rate of travel insurance tax payable to 17.5 per cent for everyone.

Mr Smith believes that brokers and banks will continue to offer better deals. He says: "Products bought direct are still likely to be cheaper, because the travel agent is putting a fairly hefty mark-up on it. Buying direct will still be a better deal for the customer."



Fishing for revenue: From 1 August, travel insurance will be taxed at 17.5 per cent rather than 4 per cent

Photograph: Frank Orel/Tony Stone Images

### Awash in a sea of Rolexes and camcorders

Travel insurance is there to protect people in the event of unforeseen accidents and minor tragedies that can befall anyone holidaying abroad. Most of us will never need to make a claim on our cover. But a minority will have cause to.

And, as far as an even smaller minority is concerned, if all the claims for lost property were to be believed, Florida would be knee-deep in video cameras and the beaches of the Cote d'Azur awash in Rolex watches.

The medical cover also attracts its share of fraudsters. Here are just two examples of criminal claims, taken from the files of insurer Home & Overseas:

■ A Glasgow man submitted more than 10

claims for £2,500 tailor-made suits which he claimed had been lost in transit by various airlines. He used a pad of receipt he had acquired from a real tailor. He was caught after the police raided his home and discovered a cabinet full of claim forms and a leaflet entitled *How to make £2,000 on your holiday*.

■ A London woman claimed for loss of sight in her left eye five times over a period of 18 months. The accidents she reported included a street attack in Tehran, falling off a chair while trying to get her suitcase out of the loft and having someone fall on her in a swimming pool. She pocketed more than £100,000 from insurers before being caught and sentenced to 18 months in prison.

### The Chancellor's travel sting

	Europe		Worldwide	
	Current	New	Current	New
Single Trip Cover (17 days)				
Two adults:	£38.68	£44.75	£81.80	£92.44
Two adults and three children:	£49.50	£55.95	£102.25	£115.85
Two adults, one over 65:	£39.48	£45.14	£122.70	£138.85

Travel premium changes showing August 1, 1998. Increase in insurance premium tax to 17.5 per cent on policies bought from banks or brokers. Excludes ski cover. Assumes that adults are under 65 unless otherwise stated and that children are aged between 2 and 17.

Source: Douglas Cox Tyrie

## How not 2 b a smart investor

Nic Cicutti finds that Barclays' new baby, b<sup>2</sup>, offers its customers more style than substance

Millions of risk-averse bank and building society customers are to be targeted by a new, "hip" subsidiary of Barclays Bank, offering equity-linked products that guarantee money back should stock markets fall.

Barclays has set up b<sup>2</sup>, a telephone-based operation which aims to wean savers away from an ingrained tendency to stash their cash in deposit accounts.

According to b<sup>2</sup>, 4 million Britons "lost" an average £2,700 each by not investing in the stock market. Although they made £246 in interest pay-

ments from their accounts, had they placed their money in shares they would have gained 10 times that much.

To win them over, b<sup>2</sup> will offer an advanced savings account (ASA), a fund that can be placed in a tax-free PEP or new Individual Savings Account from April 1999. Unlike typical savings accounts, this one gives investors limited exposure to the stock market through its Stock Market Growth Fund, which aims to outperform the FTSE 100 share index.

But, unlike most equity funds, the ASA guarantees that should the market fall during one of three investment periods—three, five or seven years—savers' money will be returned in full.

Mark Bogard, managing director of b<sup>2</sup>, says: "Many people feel that they could make more of their money than in the building society. They simply don't feel confident or com-

fortable to do anything about it.... We have spoken to thousands of savers and found they wanted that gap bridged by a company with the know-how, security and stability of a blue-chip financial provider. Savers want something safe but exciting."

It buys a derivative product which is used to meet the guarantee of a return of funds if stock markets should fall.

Whereas other guaranteed funds set a 5 per cent cap on potential losses each quarter, the ASA refunds funds in full—but only as long as the money is left invested over the pre-agreed period referred to earlier. Otherwise, the guarantee will only cover 85 per cent of a fund's value: if stock markets fall by more than that—tough.

The cost of this guarantee is extremely high. Typically, between 5 and 8 per cent of the sum invested is used to buy the derivatives to protect the capital. In the case of b<sup>2</sup>, it is between 13.7 and 13.9 per cent.

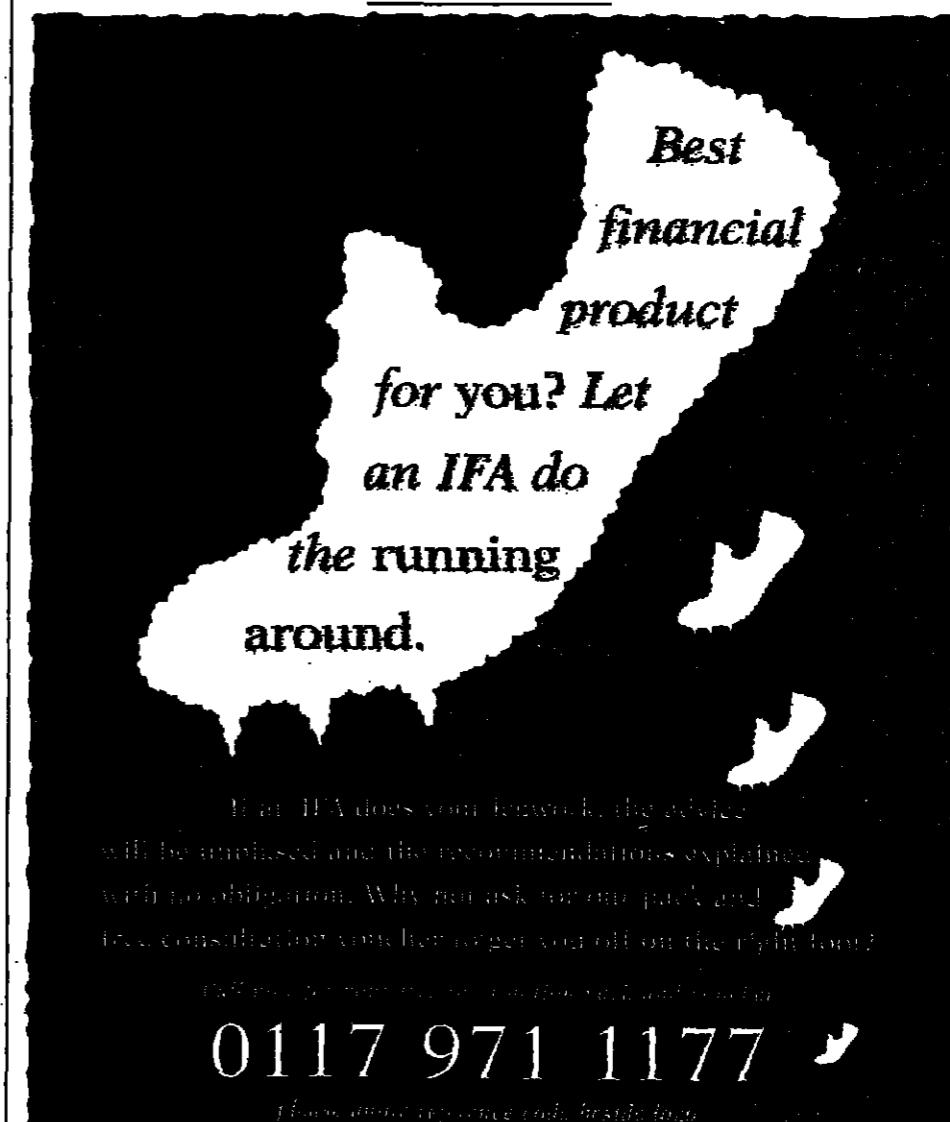
The effect of this is simple: if the Stock Market Growth Fund were to rise by 45 per cent over three years, a reasonable bull run, the value of a £100 investment would be £124.84,

equivalent to about 8.2 per cent a year. Hardly that exciting. Of course, this doesn't include dividends, which might add 2 per cent or more annually. But then, the company's 1.5 per cent annual management fee plus 0.9 per cent bid-offer spread would dent those.

The essence of the new b<sup>2</sup> account, however, is the premise that today's investors want a combination of things. One of them is accessibility. b<sup>2</sup> aims to provide it with instant access, total flexibility as to payments, telephone access seven days a week and no penalties for withdrawals.

The company calculates that its trendy image will help it break into the market for building society accounts. Whether it succeeds depends on the level of excitement prospective clients are seeking. Judging by the product they are being tempted with—not much.

### Thought for the day



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### INDEX

#### Closed banks

The Government this week launched an investigation into high street banks and threatened to toughen the existing Banking Code of Practice after complaints that some institutions are failing to deal openly with their customers.

Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said she was "extremely concerned" about claims that some banks are not telling their customers about different accounts.

The probe also follows angry protests from clients of Northern Rock, the former building society, who claim they have been switched between accounts without their consent.

#### Eager savers

Research by Alliance & Leicester has managed to find a strong "will to save" among 18 to 26-year-olds. People in their late 20s and 30s also said they wanted to save more. To cater for this hitherto invisible band of young savers, Alliance & Leicester is launching a new account with the option of saving by monthly standing order over one, two or three years.

#### Finer China

Which is worth more: a transfer-printed copy of a Chinese blue and white tea bowl, made in Staffordshire in about 1815, or an original one made in China in the mid-18th century with the design painted by hand? As John Windsor explains on page 3, they are worth about the same. And both are eminently collectable.

#### Well endowed?

Will your endowment policy be worth enough to pay off your mortgage when it matures? These and a range of other questions about with-profits policies are analysed in a special feature by Nic Cicutti on pages 6 and 7.



## Barclays' new deal fails to square up

NIC CICUTTI

Every now and then someone comes along with a new idea that changes the way we perceive the world of personal finance.

More than a decade ago, Direct Line did it with car and home insurance, which it decided to sell over the telephone. First Direct, a subsidiary of Midland Bank, has taken since 1989 to achieve the same with telephone banking but appears to have succeeded at last.

Virgin did it a few years ago, when it launched its low-cost tracker PEP, also available over the phone. The company's product has now been superseded by better ones, but its initiative forced others to follow suit. The slew of supermarket banks - Tesco, Sainsbury's, Safeway - in the past 24 months is another marketing idea which combines simplicity with a good deal for savers.

Will we see b<sup>2</sup>, the new subsidiary of Barclays Bank, in a similar way in a few years' time? Anything is possible, of course, but I doubt it. Perhaps I should clarify my view: I hope not, for were it to happen it would be a sign that the British investing public has opted for a mediocre deal wrapped up in supposedly "cool" typography and design.

Details of the b<sup>2</sup> product are reported on our front page. Essentially, what the company says it is offering is a hybrid product, with the potential of better returns than a building society account, similar risks and the same ease of access.

But the reality is that almost anyone considering an investment into this sort of fund is unlikely to want to use it as some sort of instant access account. They will

want to commit their money for the longer term and, mostly, be prepared to leave it untouched for several years in the USA. If so, despite the much-vaunted accessibility of the b<sup>2</sup> account - 7am to 10pm, seven days a week - most people other than a few loonies and show-offs will tend to stick with more regular calling times. Yet they will still pay for a "service" they never use.

Moreover, the b<sup>2</sup> offering is worse, in terms of its exposure to any potential stock market gains, than many of its rival products. Unless the present bull market continues for the next seven years, potential returns are unlikely to be that exciting.

Over shorter periods of time, it is worth remembering another company which sold a three-year guaranteed fund in the early 1990s. Scottish Provident vacuumed up hundreds of millions of pounds from savers who subscribed to several tranches of its Capital Guarantee Bonds. Yet when the bonds matured, in most cases the money would have done better had it been left in a building society. Some deal.

There is also something slightly sad about Barclays owing up to the fact it can't attract punters under its own steam and has to come up with another name and treacle imagery to do so.

If so, I'm not convinced this is a winner. It smacks too much of corporate forty-somethings devising a strategy to target a market of fiftysomethings who want to be thirtysomethings. Mark Bogard, managing director at b<sup>2</sup>, calls it "safe but exciting". I call it William Hague with a baseball cap.

### MONEY MAKEOVER

## Plans to maximise lump-sum savings

#### THE MAKEOVER

Name: Patricia Willmot

Age: 57

Occupation: Call co-ordinator for a large company

The problem: Pat recently inherited about £30,000, which she has placed mostly in bank or building society accounts. She also has shares from Halifax and share options from her work worth £20,000. After planning for potential emergencies she wants to invest her surplus funds, which include bank and building society deposit accounts, in the most useful way possible.

The solution: A reserve fund needs to be set aside. Thereafter, it makes sense to sell the shares and use this money, plus whatever is left from the inheritance, to diversify into other collective investments and spread her risk.

Patricia Willmot is divorced with two grown-up daughters. She has worked for her employer for 19 years and currently earns £34,700 a year in a senior administrative role which provides her with private healthcare, a share option scheme and a final-salary pension scheme with a retirement age of 65. Pat would like to work until 65, but is worried a merger of her company lead to her being made redundant.

In addition to her Halifax shares and share options, plus her deposit accounts and £3,000 in a Tessa, Pat is paying £178 a month into a Halifax personal equity plan (PEP), and two with-profit endowments with Standard Life, set to mature in 2002 and 2007. Her home is valued at £100,000, on which she has a mortgage of £66,000 on a three-year discount which she is part-way through. She is fairly risk-averse.

To protect herself (and the mortgage) against the threat of illness, Pat pays £188 a month for a critical illness policy which would pay out £66,000 in the event of her suffering one of a range of serious illnesses.

The adviser: James Bruce, an independent financial adviser who is a member of the Institute of Financial Planning and the Society of Financial Ad-



Patricia Willmot could save over £100 a month by rethinking her critical illness insurance

Photograph: Keith Dobney

visers. His company, Corporate and Personal Planning, is based at Highwoods Square, Highwoods, Colchester, Essex (01206 841176).

The advice: Pat has several objectives. She wants to establish an emergency fund and would like a new kitchen in her home, which might cost up to £10,000. She also wants to review her existing investments and invest any other surplus as appropriate. A review of her expenditure shows she might have £100 or so available for regular investment each month.

Generally, the size of emergency funds one has is up to the individual, although I regard three months' expenditure for a critical illness policy which would pay out £66,000 in the event of her suffering one of a range of serious illnesses.

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She also wants to review her existing investments and invest any other surplus as appropriate.

A review of her expenditure shows she might have £100 or so available for regular investment each month.

up the funds in a notice account, which should give her a higher rate of interest. On balances of £10,000, Halifax pays a gross rate of interest of 7.3 per cent. (Source: *Money Facts*, April 1998). A marginally higher rate of interest, cur-

Therefore, it makes sense to think in terms of investments. Her shares have been acquired by chance and do not really offer a reasonably diversified, actively managed portfolio. We typically recommend people achieve these two aims through

This leaves a balance of about £26,000. My advice would be to look at fixed-interest funds for about £12,000 of this money. A good fund for this would be Exeter's Zero Preference unit trust, which aims to produce steady capital growth with minimal risk. In the past five years it has achieved returns of 9.1 per cent.

I would then recommend that about £8,000 be placed in managed funds, which will provide a balance of fixed interest and equity-based exposure. The Framlington Managed Distribution unit trust aims to combine an above-average level of income with long-term capital growth.

The current split of the fund means a majority is invested in UK equities, with the balance in fixed-interest securities and cash. Over the past three years it has achieved annualised growth rates of about 13.4 per cent, with income of about 4.2 per cent a year. However, this

leaves Pat with a balance of

money can be reinvested until an income option becomes necessary later on.

Finally, I would go for a direct equity fund. Gartmore's British Growth unit trust focuses on top-notch UK equities. Typically, blue-chip stocks make up about 70 per cent of Gartmore's portfolio. Again, the performance of this fund has been above-average in its sector for several years. My advice is that £6,000 be placed in this fund.

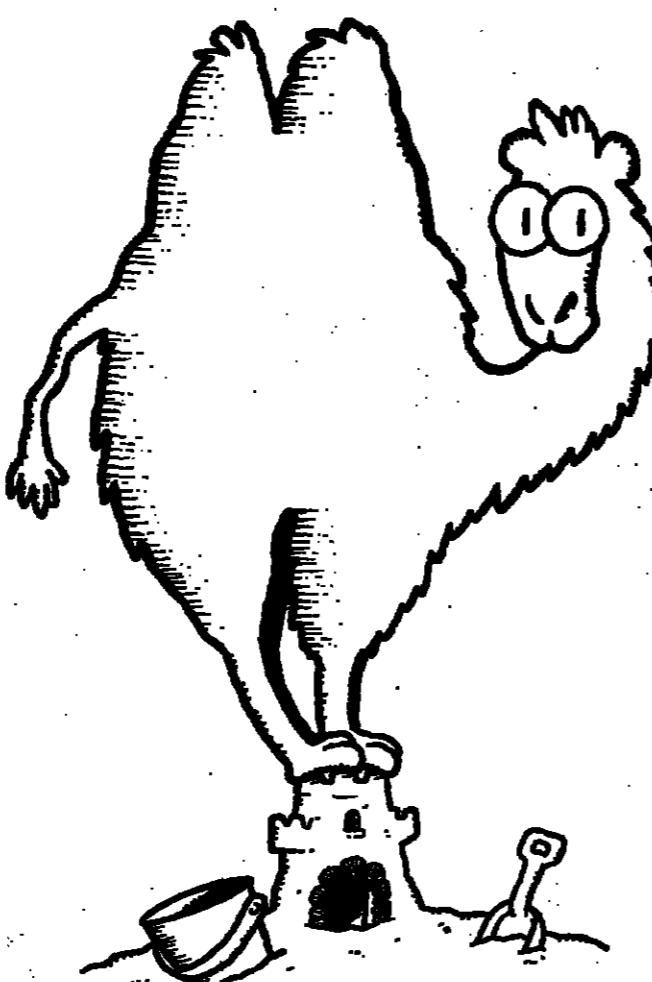
My recommendation is that the last two investments be placed within a Skandia Multi-FUND wrapper. Skandia is an insurance company which offers a choice of about 100 funds from 11 large companies. It also offers six-monthly valuations, annual income reporting, a freephone desk and helpline.

There are extra charges levied by Skandia for this service, on top of the annual fund management fee. But for someone who might be seeking regular reviews and active management - that is, the option of switching from one fund to another to maximise out-performance and minimise poor returns, Skandia's option involves no charge for switching, save any bid-offer spread, which a discount has usually been negotiated.

Pat says she can save £100 a month. My suggestion is that the money be divided equally between Newton Fund Managers Income and Jupiter Fund Managers' European unit trusts, to achieve even greater fund diversity. Again, these funds have delivered consistent above-average performance. Here, too, I would advise the investment take place under the Skandia wrapper.

Lastly, Pat indicated that she pays £188 a month for her critical illness policy with Halifax. I would suggest that a term-based policy, linked to the number of years she has left on her mortgage, would be much cheaper. A similar critical illness policy with another provider for nine years, when her endowments mature, could cost as little as £66 a month, a considerable cost saving.

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# True blue investments

## Collect to invest:

Prices at auction are rising as the British love affair with blue and white china is rekindled, writes John Windsor

You can buy a transfer-printed copy of a Chinese blue and white tea bowl, made in Staffordshire in about 1815, for £60-£80 at auction. What would be the cost of an original - made in China in the mid-18th century and with the pagoda design painted by hand?

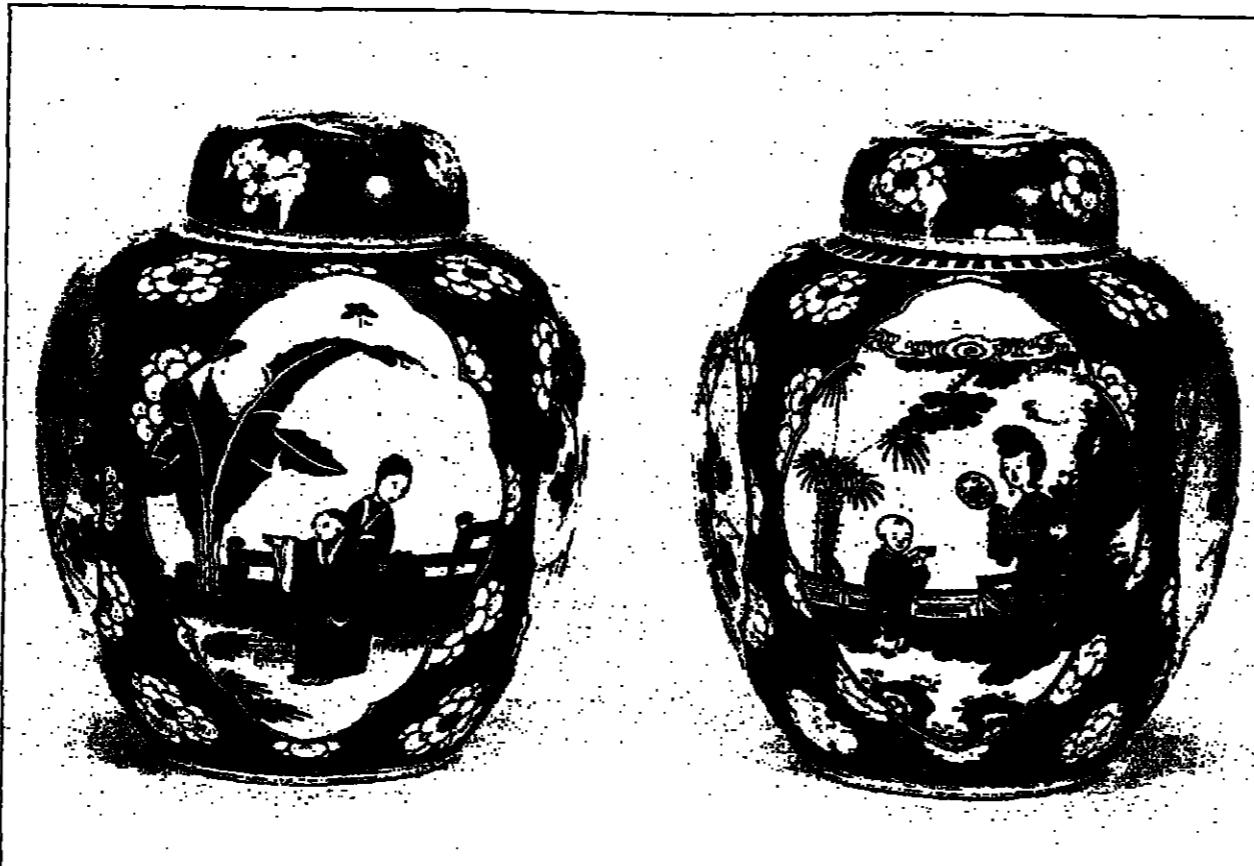
Answer: about the same. Increasing demand for British blue and white china is pushing prices steadily upwards, leaving the real thing undervalued. Both are worth investing in.

Even boring old transfer-printed willow pattern, the pastiche Chinoiserie said to have been dreamed up by Thomas Minton, is rising in price. Big willow-pattern meat serving dishes dating from Minton's lifetime (he died in 1836) that might have sold for £60-£80 five years ago, now fetch £100-£150.

The British love affair with blue and white china has blown hot and cold over the past four centuries. It is now being rekindled. In the 16th century, rare blue and white Chinese imports were mounted in silver gilt by aristocrats and royalty, partly because the cobalt blue pigment was thought to be a mixture of alabaster and sapphire.

Output had increased and prices had dropped to affordable middle-class levels by the mid-18th century, when one tea ship, the Prince George, brought back in a single cargo 26,000 cups and saucers, the same number of plates, 200 tea sets and 462 dinner services. At that time, some British-made porcelain was unable to withstand boiling water.

After Meissen and Wedgwood cracked the technology, it was Britain and not China that



The blues: prices for such vases have so far risen slowly. They are estimated to sell for about £400 at Sotheby's

supplied most of the world's blue and white. After 1815, little was imported from China. And by 1840, no Brit with any taste would invite friends to dine off it. It was given to the servants. By the turn of the century, even the poor were fed up with it.

But in the course of the decline there had been a brief but ardent revival - the "Chinaman's" craze - from the 1870s, coinciding with the orientalism of the Aesthetic Movement. Chinoiserie pieces were stacked with blue and white Chinese vases, much of it supplied by the London shop Liberty.

Pairs of those vases are still relatively cheap - but are unlikely to remain so for long.

They are the interior designer's post-minimalist dream.

At Sotheby's Billingshurst saleroom last month a 14in tall pair of blue and white Chinese vases of about 1880 sold for £402 (including 15 per cent buyer's premium), well within the esti-

mate of £300-£500. The pair shown here, 11.5in tall (one cover cracked), are of similar date and carry the same estimate in the 17 June sale (10.30am). Prices for such vases have so far risen gradually - four years ago, the estimates might have been only £100 lower.

Bigger price rises are occurring in blue and white transfer-printed wares, for which the 300 members of Friends of Blue are enthusiastic bidders. Members published research, including a two-volume dictionary of patterns and makers' marks, has boosted values, especially for interesting patterns and unusual shapes such as ladies' shoes. Examples from Britain's years of peak production, 1795-1840, are becoming highly collectable.

Prices for some choice printed pieces have practically doubled in four or five years. In the 17 June sale, a 19th century Spode meat plate, with an un-

usual design showing hunters on an elephant shooting at a leopard in a tree, is estimated £450-£600. A similar piece, estimated £200-£300 five years ago, fetched £540.

The really big prices for British blue and white are for British-painted Delftware, brought to this country in the mid-17th century by Dutch potters who put tin oxide in the lead glaze to add whiteness. A British Delftware dish, hand-painted with a cat playing a fiddle and dancing mice, fetched £74,750 at Sotheby's London last year. A Bristol Delftware blue and white dish of about 1760, estimated £250-£350 in the 17 June Billingshurst sale, would probably have fetched only £150 four years ago.

Prices will continue to rise as more collectors, both here and abroad, are attracted into this increasingly well-researched field. The United States already has a Blue Willow Society.

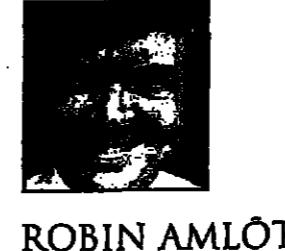
The Friends of Blue's 25th anniversary is being marked by an exhibition of transfer-printed pottery at the Wedgwood Visitor Centre (01782-204218) in Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, until 12 July. "True Blue" by Gaye Blake Roberts contains an illustrated catalogue of the exhibition. It is £11.50 (plus £1.95 p&p) from The Secretary, Friends of Blue, PO Box 122, Didcot OX1 1OY.

Sotheby's Summers Place, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9AD (01403-833534). Christie's South Kensington sale of oriental ceramics, Thursday, 10.30am (0171-581 7611).

"Dictionary of Blue and White Printed Pottery 1780-1880" by AW Poynter and RK Henrywood is available from the Antique Collectors' Club, 5 Church Street, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP2 1DS. Volume I £29.95, vol II £25, plus £3 p&p for one or both. (01394-385501).

## INTERNET INVESTOR

Hi-tech stocks  
cannot net  
such large  
gains for  
much longer



Robin Amlot

pertain to stocks in which you may be interested.

Activity has not been consigned to the other side of the Atlantic. Scottish Power's Scottish Telecom subsidiary paid £66m in cash for Demon Internet, which works out roughly to £370 per subscriber. Founded in June 1992, Demon Internet was the pioneer of low-cost, flat-rate Internet connectivity in the UK for both business and home users. It is the largest dial-up Internet service provider in the UK, with over 70 per cent of this market. Mind you, there is more to this acquisition for Scottish Telecom than Internet market share. It will also boost its annual turnover by around £20m as Demon Internet's telephone bill switches to it and away from BT.

Will the Internet stocks' bubble burst? Yes, of course it will. Bubbles always burst, slowly deflating, maybe, or explosively decompressing perhaps. There will be a shakeout in the sector. It has happened before. Just ask anybody who bought Netscape shares at their peak before Microsoft turned its attention to the world wide web. However, what does makes these stocks different to the rest of the market is their age.

The internet is not a mature business. And, yes, you can read that statement in more ways than one. The prices of internet stocks are being driven by forecasts of massive increases in advertising spending on the net, by businesses attempting to reach consumers who will themselves, within a few short years, be spending even larger sums of money buying through websites.

Imagine at the turn of the last century somebody had offered you a glimpse of how important the car was going to be in the 20th century and then offered you the chance to invest in automobile stocks. Mind you, with my luck I would probably have gone for the company making square wheels (to stop the car rolling back down hill). The trick with investing in Internet stocks for the 21st century is to make sure that we avoid the "square wheel".

You also get search tools, which allow you to view all the messages which

Silicon Investor: [www.techstocks.com](http://www.techstocks.com)

## LOOSE CHANGE

Henderson Investors is offering a discount of 2 per cent on lump-sum investments into its Global Technology Fund, a unit trust which invests in both computer and medical technology. Minimum investment is £1,000. Call 0800 212256.

Axa Sun Life is launching an ethical investment unit trust. The company says its product not only will operate on the basis of strict ethical criteria, its risk profile will also be lower than usual for such investments. Until 22 May, investors will be offered a discount of 2 per cent on the initial charge or an extra 1 per cent extra allocation on the investment in the fund. Call 0171 6067788.

TSB is launching a new issue of its six-year Guaranteed Stock-market Bond, with growth linked to the FTSE 100 share index. The bond offers a cash-back guarantee should share prices fall. Gains paid out will come from the average of the FTSE 100 in the final 12 months of the bond's life. Exposure of invested capital to growth is 94

per cent, with the maximum increase payable limited to 80 per cent. Call 0500 758444.

Citibank International is relaxing the criteria for customers wishing to open an account to anyone with a household income of £30,000, provided they pay their salaries into their account. The scheme is designed to attract couples. Call Alyson West on 0171 5286225.

The GM credit card, from Vauxhall, is offering its cardholders an extra 500 bonus points - equivalent to £500 - if they buy a Vauxhall car with their existing rebate points up to 30 September 1998. Cardholder redemption maximums of 2,500 points still apply.

Premier Portfolio Managers is launching a UK Smaller Companies fund, targeting companies with a market capitalisation of £50m to £450m. Up to 20 per cent of the fund may also be invested in companies not matching those criteria, including AIM-listed firms. Premier is offering a 1 per cent discount

off its usual 5.5 per cent initial charge until 1 June. Call 0800 212577.

Legal & General is launching a new Mortgage Protection Plan, an accident sickness and unemployment cover which combines 30-day triggers when

redundancy strikes with longer deferment options for sickness benefits. An existing borrower who is seeking disability cover to apply after 180 days and unemployment cover after 30 days, would be £5.75 a month for every £100 of cover sought. Call 0173 5286259.

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## The Index-Tracking PEP

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BRIAN  
TORA

**Fear is driving the bulls**

Taking a break from the bustle of markets should provide the chance to distance yourself from events and gain a little perspective on business affairs. In practice, any perspective is usually eroded by the acres of required reading as you endeavour to catch up with a fortnight's worth of financial news.

Their methodology is simple. By dividing the number of bulls by the sum of the total bulls and bears, they reach a percentage figure which gives a contrarian indicator for the market. A high percentage bull rate is an indication that a market top is about to be reached. Low, and you could be seeing a bottom.

One of my colleagues has used this system to great effect in keeping us all committed to the US despite widespread concern over the pace of the rise. The Index is now encouraging him to change his view. Suddenly, the bulls are all in the ascendancy - and it all coincides with continuing strength in the market. He now believes (as indeed the indicator suggests) the next move in prices has to be down.

Sellers were not much in evidence when shares took a tumble on the back of speculation over a rate rise from the Fed. We may have lost 100 points-plus here in London, but the real business came when bargain hunters emerged to pick among the debris of a drab day's dealing.

The fear is evident from the way in which professional managers are clearly worried about being out of the market. Two years and 40 per cent ago, some leading managers were pointing to an alarming rise in valuation levels. A number felt a correction was due and raised cash in anticipation of a setback that never happened. The underperformance of these leading managers is now a matter of record. Being left behind again is not an option.

It helps perpetuate a rather unhealthy scenario. Since 1963, Paine Webber, in the US, has published a graph of professional investors' sentiment. Known as the Bulls and Bears Sentiment, it classifies the opinions expressed in more than 140 market

newsletters, produced by independent non-broking organisations, as bullish, bearish and correction. Correction consists of those investors who may be nervous in the short term, but remain optimistic in the long run.

So a correction looks to be on the cards. It all depends on the extent of any setback, but the nice warm relaxed feeling that remains with me from my holiday is not to be translated into buying frenzy, at least for the time being.

*Brian Tora is chairman of the Greig Middleton investment strategy committee.*

A - Minimum age 18 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or holder's existing customer APR - Annual percentage rate  
ASU - Accident, sickness and unemployment insurance  
B+C - Buildings and contents insurance  
H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged  
LTV - Loan to value  
MP - Mortgage indemnity premium  
N - Introductory rate for a limited period  
U - Unemployment insurance

\* If completion is before 30/4/98  
All rates subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01602 500577 7 May 1998

Source: MONEYFACTS, MONEYFACTS 01602 500577 7 May 1998

**BEST BORROWING RATES**

Telephone	1% Rate and period	Max. rate %	Fee	Location
<b>MORTGAGES</b>				
Scarborough BS	0890 337149	9.95% for 1 year	85%	£750
Postmortgage	0890 000088	9.49% to 30.60%	75%	£285
Northern Rock	0845 005 0500	9.19% to 12.03%	95%	£285
		No MP for adv up to 95%		
<b>VARIOUS DISCOUNTED RATES</b>				
Scarborough BS	0890 337149	1.59% for 1 year	80%	£250
Postmortgage	0890 000088	4.44% to 20.00%	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 005 0500	8.05% to 12.07%	85%	£250
		Reduced rate		
<b>FIRST TIME BUYER FIXED RATES</b>				
Northern Rock	0845 005 0500	3.88% to 7.00%	85%	£285
Hallmark	0890 101110	5.75% to 31.00%	90%	£165
Nationwide BS	0890 302010	6.19% for 5 years	95%	£285
		No high lending fee (MP)		
<b>FIRST TIME BUYER VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES</b>				
Staffordshire	01622 317485	5.25% to 12.50%	80%	£50
Postmortgage	0890 000088	5.59% to 33.00%	85%	£285
Nationwide BS	0890 302010	6.05% to 12.07%	85%	£285
		Reduced rate		
<b>UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS</b>				
Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £100 over 3 yrs		
<b>UNSECURED</b>				
		With insurance	Without insurance	
Northern Rock	0845 321421	9.9% H	£165.13	£166.11
Yorkshire BS	0890 202122	12.5%	£160.33	£165.77
Direct Line	0181 661 0000	12.0% A	£165.75	£166.38
<b>SECURED LOANS (SECOND CHARGE)</b>				
Telephone	APR %	Max LTV Advance	Term	
Clydebank	0802 440024	9.7%	Reg £25 to £15K	5 years to 25 years
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121121	10.7%	52.5% to £10K	3 years to relevant
First Direct	0345 3010103	11.25%	£50 to Reg	Up to 40 years
<b>OVERDRAFTS</b>				
Telephone	Accepted	Authorised	Unauthorised	
	Telephone	Accepted	5 yrs	APR %
Alliance & Leicester	0890 555055	Alliance	0.95%	12.00% 2.20%
Bank of Scotland Direct	0800 004004	Direct cheque	1.1%	11.0% - 25.0%
Nationwide BS	0890 302010	Repayment	0.97%	12.2% 2.10%
<b>CREDIT CARDS</b>				
Telephone	Card Type	Rate %	APR %	Annual fee, free min fee, period, income
Capital One Bank	0800 660000	Visa	0.5695%	6.905%
RBS Adverts	0800 777770	Visa	0.649%	7.905%
Co-operative Bank	0800 100000	Advantage Visa	0.599%	8.905%
<b>GOLD CARDS</b>				
Capital One Bank	0800 660000	Visa	0.5695%	6.905% 54 days
Co-operative Bank	0800 512121	Bank Rate Visa	0.65%	7.905% 56 days
RBS Adverts	0800 777770	Visa	0.649%	7.905% 56 days
<b>STORE CARDS</b>				
Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods		
	5 yrs	5 yrs	5 yrs	APR
John Lewis	Visa store	1.25%	18.0%	1.25% 18.0%
BS	Visa store	1.95%	25.0%	2.15% 25.0%
Marks & Spencer	Visa	1.97%	25.5%	2.07% 27.0%
<small>A - Minimum age 18 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or holder's existing customer APR - Annual percentage rate ASU - Accident, sickness and unemployment insurance B+C - Buildings and contents insurance H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged LTV - Loan to value MP - Mortgage indemnity premium N - Introductory rate for a limited period U - Unemployment insurance</small>				
<small>* If completion is before 30/4/98 All rates subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01602 500577 7 May 1998</small>				

**BEST SAVINGS RATES**

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %
<b>INSTANT ACCESS</b>				
Clydebank Bank	0800 442626	Savings		0.75%
	0800 222200	Card Saver		0.50%
Steed & Shenton BS	0845 413355	Branch instant		0.50%
Leeds & Huddersfield BS	0845 225777	Premium Access		0.75%
<b>INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS</b>				
Standard Life Bank	0845 555667	Direct Access	Instant	£1 0.75%
	0800 222200	Instant Access	Instant	£2 0.75%
Scotian Widows Bank	0845 845022	Direct Savings	Instant	£1 0.75%
Swaffham	0800 555565	Direct Savings	Instant	£1 0.75%
Northern Rock	0845 600 0767	Save Direct	Instant	£5 0.75%
<b>NOTICE ACCOUNTS &amp; BONDS</b>				
Scarborough BS	01723 500016	Scarborough 30	30 Day	£1 2.00% 7.00%
	01723 500016	Scarborough 4	60 Day	£1 2.00% 7.00%
Legal & General Bank	0800 111200	60 Direct 4	20 Day	£1 2.00% 7.00%
	0800 2022121	Post 30	1 Year	£2 2.00% 8.00%
British & West	0800 3232101	Post 30	1 Year	£2 2.00% 8.00%
Investor Bank (UK)	0171 203 1650	Post 30	1 Year	£2 2.00% 8.00%
<b>CHEQUE ACCOUNTS</b>				
Investor Bank (UK)	0171 203 1650	HIC 5000	Instant	£50,000 0.45%
	0113 225 6220	Asset Reserve	Instant	£10,000 0.50%
Cheltenham & Gloucester	0800 424926	Classic Post	Instant	£10,000 0.50%
	0171 555 2233	Investor Access	Instant	£10,000 0.70%
<b>FIXED RATE BONDS</b>				
Norwich & Peterborough	01733 272222	Fixed Rate Bond	6 Month	£5,000 7.00% 7.00%
	01500 555200	Fixed Rate Bond	12 Month	£10,000 7.00% 7.00%
Portsmouth BS	0800 307000	Branch Fixed Rate Bond 1 Year	5 Year	£500 7.00% 7.00%
	0162 555300	Fixed Rate	6 Year	£2,500 7.00% 7.00%
<b>FIRST TESSAS</b>				
Norwich & Peterborough	01733 27			

# Follow the sage and invest in another hobby



THE  
JONATHAN  
DAVIS  
COLUMN

When Warren Buffett cannot find the stock opportunities he wants to invest in it could be time to think seriously about sitting out the rest of this bull market

This is the bad news for anyone who still wants to believe that the current bull market will go on for ever. Warren Buffett is playing a lot more bridge than he was.

By his own admission, this is not something the modern world's most accomplished stock market investor would be doing if share prices were not now so high. The chairman of Berkshire Hathaway confided to stockholders at his annual meeting this week that he is putting

in around 10 hours a week into his bridge, either at the card table or (his new hobby) on the internet. His long-standing partner - Charlie Munger - is also, I can reveal, playing a good deal of golf.

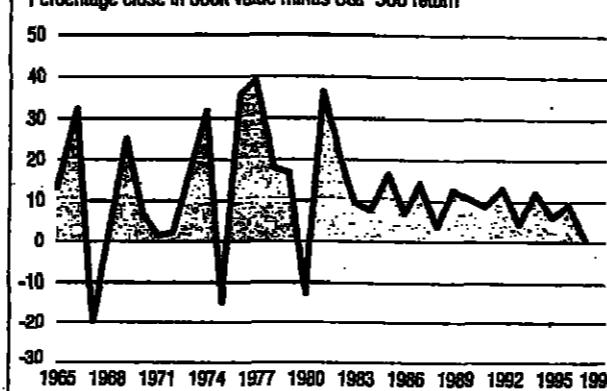
Well, you may ask, so what? At 67, Mr Buffett is now past conventional retirement age while his chum Mr Munger, at 73, is even older. Why shouldn't they be having a bit of fun, as long as the shareholders are happy with it - which, judging

by the ecstatic scenes at the annual meeting of Mr Buffett's company Berkshire Hathaway this week, they certainly are?

I can vouch for the fact that the annual gathering of the Buffett fans in his home town of Omaha, Nebraska, while always unconventional, has now become more of a pilgrimage than a shareholders' meeting. This year, more than 10,000 shareholders flew in from all round the world to watch a video and pay homage to the man who is routinely - and not without reason - described as the greatest stock market investor of the postwar period.

So great was the clamour to get a good seat in the sports stadium where the meeting was held that the first investor started queuing at 4.15am. By the time they opened the doors at 7am, the line of shareholders stretched more than a quarter of a mile around the vast car park. Mr Buffett himself was followed everywhere he went by a camera crew and treated more like a basketball star than the chairman of a large and successful diversified holding

Buffett's edge over the market  
Percentage close in book value minus S&P 500 return



company - which is what, strictly speaking, is.

The hoopla and ceremonial attending Mr Buffett's every doing has increased dramatically in the last two years and speaks volumes for the current state of popular enthusiasm for the stock market in the States, which is infectious but not without its disturbing aspects. (If you believe one recent survey, no fewer than 20 per cent of the vast new army of first-time mutual fund investors believe that returns from shares are guaranteed by the Federal Government.)

It is difficult to recall, visiting the States now, that it was only seven years ago, during its last recession, that the nation was in the throes of a crisis of confidence over what many saw as the impending Japanese takeover of their economy.

Mr Buffett himself is not joining in the general bull market euphoria. When quizzed, he sticks to a carefully worded formula about the level of the markets. Current market levels, he says, can be justified if two conditions continue to be met. One is that long-term interest

rates remain at or below their current level (6 per cent for the long-bond yield). The second is that Corporate America continues to earn the unprecedented returns on equity it has experienced over the past five years. How realistic are those conditions, in Buffett's view? Answer: not very. "Two big ifs" is what he called them this week.

Interest rates certainly don't seem to be his concern. He would not have bought \$6bn of long-dated Treasury bonds last week if he thought bond yields were seriously about to rise. That investment is a geared bet that interest rates will fall rather than rise. It is the second condition which worries Mr Buffett and his long-time partner Mr Munger more.

They have profited handsomely from the revival in US corporate profits in recent years, and the rise in the price that the market will pay for those profits. Mr Buffett's trademark holdings in consumer companies with strong franchises have soared in value. His investment in Coca-Cola

alone is now worth the best part of \$15bn.

But can the record level of profitability last? Short term, it is not impossible. A wise old bird like Mr Buffett also knows that bull markets have a life of their own in their later stages, and publicly he is not going to risk his hard-earned reputation for omniscience by trying to call the next downturn. But the odds against profits staying at current levels are quite long. As Mr Munger pointed out this week, returns on equity of 20 per cent above their long-run average. He and Mr Buffett think there is no margin of safety in current price levels, and are starting to act accordingly.

Last year Berkshire Hathaway started to trim its equity positions, albeit modestly, in favour of bonds and some more exotic investments, such as silver. Having made his name as a patient long-term accumulator of shares, for the past two years Mr Buffett has actually been a net seller of equities - a striking reversal of previous trends. His close mate Mr Munger

seemed to hint at one point that Mr Buffett's decision to dabble in the silver market owed as much to boredom as anything else. There is another way of looking at this, however. On the face of it, the so-called Sage of Omaha has had two quite outstanding years: +43 per cent in 1996 and +34 per cent in 1997. That, however, is only fractionally better than the US stock market as a whole over the same period. In relative terms, Mr Buffett's performance, as my chart shows, is nothing like as effortless as it once was.

That is hardly his fault: the amount of money he has to invest is now vast and the range of available opportunities is shrinking. The truth is that he needs a more testing climate in which to demonstrate his superior investment skills and a roaring bull market like the one we have had for the last couple of years is not an easy environment in which to sparkle. He is happy to sit back and enjoy his bridge while the bull thunders on, but he is certainly not in the retiring mood, just waiting for more profitable opportunities.

## MONEY & ETHICS

### Take a principled position in stocks

Eliminate the negative, accentuate the positive and you can meet both your ethical and your financial concerns. Iain Morse explains

local authorities managing funds on ethical guidelines is also significant: charities alone invest over £10bn this way. A growing number of local authority pension schemes also "screen" potential investments according to ethical criteria.

Tessa Tenant, head of research at NPI's Global Care Fund, thinks: "Ethical investment is becoming mainstream, no longer seen as cranky, or bad for your pocket."

Acting against environmental principles can cost companies and investors in them very dear, as Richard Singleton, a fund manager at Stewardship, points out. "Take pollution. Messy industries are now having to clean up after themselves, in many cases decades after they made money from a polluting process."

"There is long-term benefit both in environmental terms and for shareholders if a company can anticipate future regulatory changes on matters like pollution and build these into current operations. This may cost a little more now, but saves money later."

But how do we assess the ethical standards of a company? The Ethical Investment and Research Service (Eiris), a charity which surveys more than 1,100 UK companies and Europe's largest 500 companies, measures their business activities against a wide range of ethical criteria. Providing an investment selection service both to private investors and fund managers, Eiris has come up with a combination of both "negative" and "positive" criteria to determine how companies make the grade.

Karen Eldridge, who works at Eiris, explains: "There's no exact definition of an ethical fund, except that ethical considerations

influence investment choice. Negative criteria amount to the avoidance of companies whose activities compromise the investor's ethical concerns. Positive criteria depend on identifying specific business activities which an investor wishes to support."

The positive and negative criteria used by Eiris serve as a benchmark for ethical fund managers and are widely used to provide investment screening.

But according to Mr Singleton at Friends Provident: "Screening can hide companies with good intentions, simply because they are currently caught up in unapproved activities. Again, pollution is a case in point. Very few of the companies we invest in can claim to leave no pollution."

"The point is to find a management team who admit they have a problem but want to sort it out. By offering our support, we give them a positive reason to do so."

He points to one of Stewardship's current investments - the Go-Ahead Group, as a case in point. Operating both bus and train services, the company is committed to buying a new generation of urban buses which have fewer gas emissions. "This will cost more now but, in five or 10 years, I would expect them to be a preferred supplier of bus services in some inner cities," thinks Mr Singleton.

Examples like this underline the way that ethical funds can differ. Some rely on "screening" both to avoid and select given shares, others have in-house research teams and take a more active approach to reforming the way companies work.

One of the first steps in making ethical investments is to decide which set of business

activities you wish to avoid and which you want to invest into. Doing some homework will help you find the fund that most closely matches your ethical concerns.

Eiris's reference guide *Money & Ethics* assesses the main ethical funds in terms of both positive and negative criteria. But ethical providers will also supply free copies of their annual reports and prospectuses, which detail both their investment philosophy and specific share holdings.

To order copies of *'Money & Ethics'*, contact Eiris on 0171-735 1351.

*'The Independent'* has produced a free, 28-page *'Guide to Ethical Finances'*, written by Nic Cicuti, the paper's personal finance editor, and sponsored by Friends Provident.

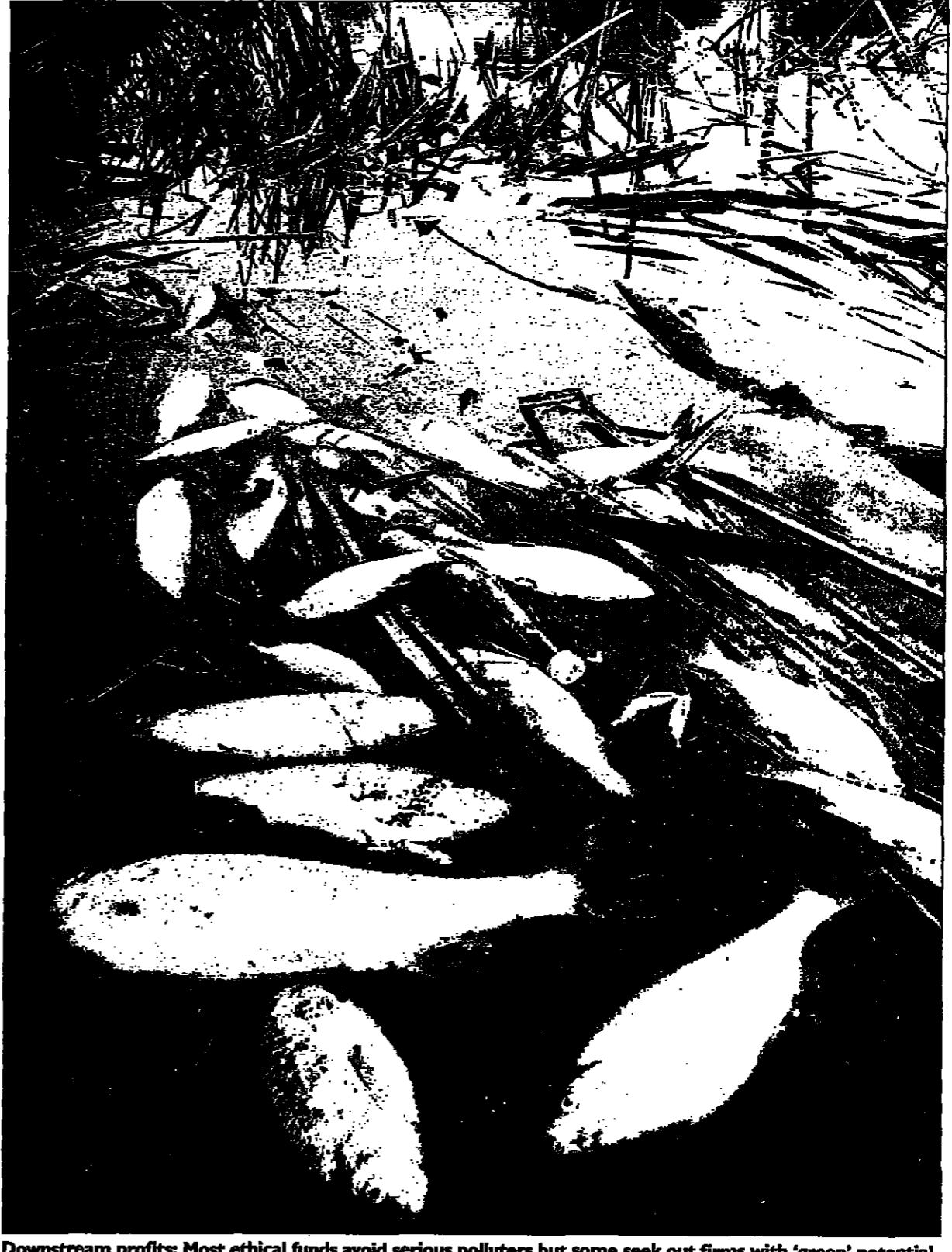
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#### What funds avoid:

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Animal testing  
Gambling  
Greenhouse gases  
Health and safety breaches  
Human rights abuses  
Intensive farming  
Military involvement, MoD contracts  
Nuclear power  
Ozone depletion  
Pesticides  
Pornography  
Roads and transport policy  
Third World concerns  
Tobacco  
Tropical hardwood  
Water pollution

#### What funds support:

Community involvement  
Disclosure  
Environmental initiatives  
Equal Opportunities  
Positive products and services



Downstream profits: Most ethical funds avoid serious polluters but some seek out firms with 'green' potential

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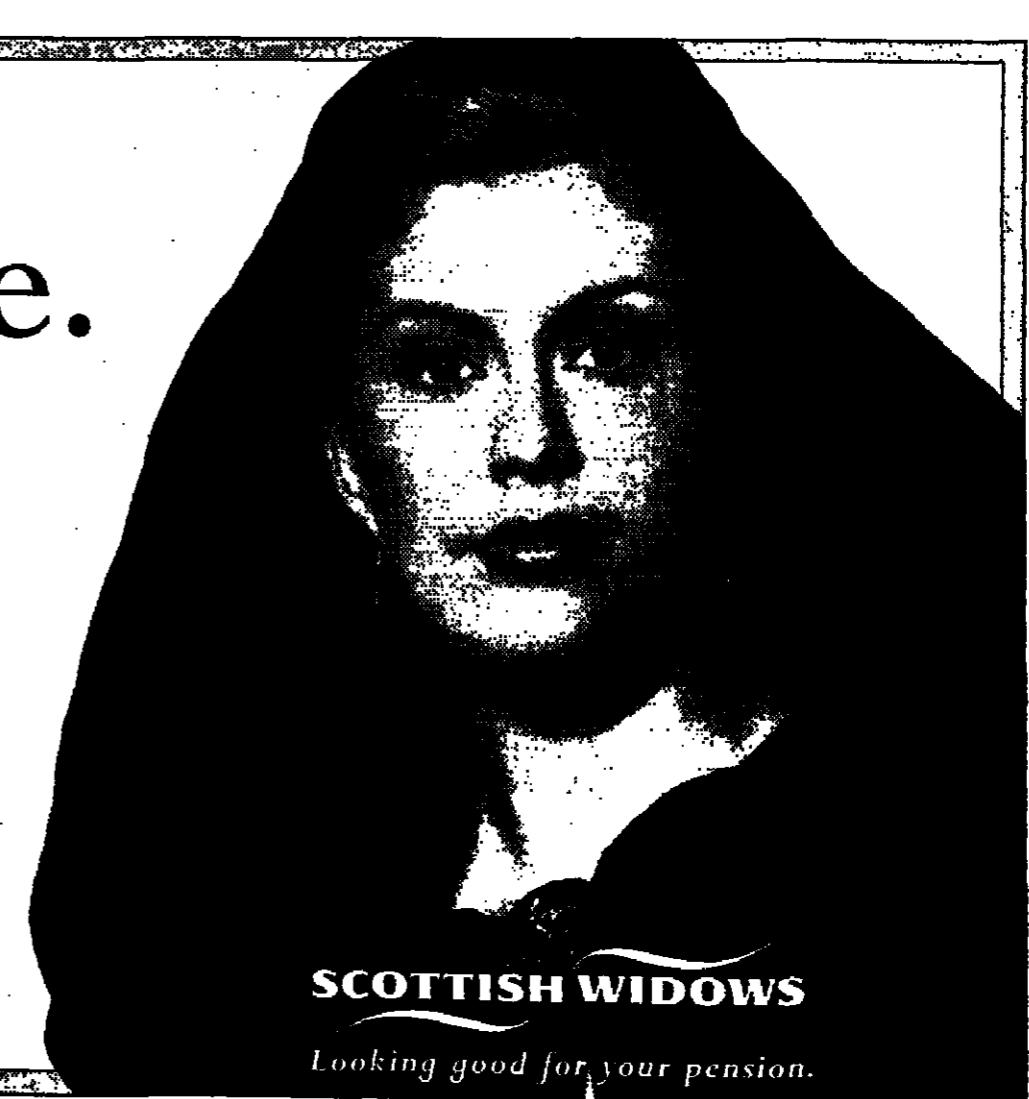
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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

Looking good for your pension.

# With-profits that add up to reduce risk

As payouts have shrunk in recent years, with-profits endowments have come under attack for being inflexible and unintelligible. But they still find supporters among financial experts. In a two-page special report, Nic Cicuti explains how they work

Every year millions of people across Britain receive strange letters from their insurance companies, telling them how much their "bonuses" will be. These aren't the huge bounties handed out to City whizzkids but the far more mundane, yet ultimately far more important, sums that are attached to with-profits endowments.

It is on the basis of these annual bonuses, plus a final - "terminal" - payout, made when a policy matures after 10, 15 or 25 years, that many of us hope to pay off our home loans, enjoy a decent income in retirement, or just receive a large lump sum.

The importance of bonus announcements cannot be underestimated. Until recently, more than 60 per cent of mortgage-holders have paid only the interest on their loans. They then made an additional monthly payment in an endowment.

Similarly, over 250,000 people with personal pension policies contribute to with-profits policies. Perhaps 750,000 investors - most of them elderly - have placed billions of pounds into with-profits bonds.

Yet, despite their seeming popularity (even today, 30 per cent of mortgage borrowers still favour them as a means of paying off their loans) endowments have gained a very dubious reputation in recent years. They are attacked as

impossible to understand, utterly inflexible and, worst of all, the amounts they pay out are said to be worth less and less - perhaps not even enough to redeem the mortgages they were there to pay off.

Yet they have their defenders, and not simply among the insurance companies which stand to gain from selling them. Amanda Davidson, a partner at Holden Meehan, a highly reputable firm of London independent financial advisers, says: "They may not be suitable for everyone, but I am quite prepared to recommend an endowment to someone. Indeed, I have one myself, along with a personal equity plan (PEP), as a means of paying my own mortgage."

So what exactly is a with-profits endowment? It allows individuals to invest in a range of stocks, shares and property via a life company fund. In most cases, investors pay regular premiums into the fund over varying periods of time, although lump-sum payments into with-profits bonds are also possible.

The investment strategy of with-profit funds is not exceptionally risky - it generally involves between 50 to 60 per cent of a portfolio going into UK equities, some 20 per cent into fixed-interest investments, about 10 to 15 per cent into property, with the remainder placed in overseas stocks.

But unlike traditional equity-linked investments, where the value of a fund rises and falls directly in line with its underlying assets, with-profits funds are different. They involve three separate elements: a guaranteed sum, which pays out at maturity or when the policyholder dies; an annual (or "reversionary") bonus, plus a terminal bonus paid out when the policy matures.

The aim of this labyrinthine bonus system is to "smooth" the peaks and troughs of stock market investment. Once a bonus is attached to a policy it cannot be taken away, locking in value. This means that in the event of a stock market crash, policyholders should not see the value of their fund collapse.

Equally, it means that if markets race ahead, savers may not see all of that upside immediately.

The logic of selling an endowment instead of surrendering it is simple. Doing so is likely to earn its holder anything up to 25 per cent more than an early surrender. But the price depends on the quality of the company and how long the policy has been in operation. Few prospective buyers will touch a policy that has run for less than seven years.

There are now more than a dozen companies, loosely flying under the banner of the Association of Policy Market Makers (APMM), which buy such policies. The price market-makers pay will depend on demand for a specific policy at that time, which means the amount paid can vary substantially.

Another option is to invest in a second-hand endowment, or "traded endowment policy" (TEP). Buying one is, in effect, a form of recycling: such policies are among a growing number sold by their previous owners instead of being surrendered back to the insurance company they were bought from in the first instance. The market for TEPs is now believed to be worth more than £250m annually, up from a few tens of millions just a few years ago.

There are firms prepared to "trawl" the market to obtain the best price on policyholders' behalf, including Baronworth Investment Services, a firm based in Ilford, Essex. A "trawler" will receive commission of up to 3 per cent for the policy it sells on policyholders' behalf.

Although market-makers hate having their time "wasted" by calculating a quote only for a seller to go elsewhere, it usually pays to shop around when disposing of an endowment.

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One advantage of TEPs is that, because they have a maturity date, they can be used to plan for eventualities some years ahead, such as university costs.

Capital-gains tax (CGT) may be paid on some policies. But it is possible to place the ownership of a policy in more than one name, using each person's £6,800 exemption. Moreover, the Chancellor's announcement of a tapered CGT system should benefit TEP buyers, who are likely to retain their policies for several years.

However, last year the Institute of Actuaries (IoA), whose members calculate how much of a bonus to attach to policies suggested that up to a fifth of private investors are being overcharged by between 15 and 20 per cent when they buy TEPs.

The IoA's stance was backed by Max



Dodgy deals: Actuaries have calculated that one-fifth of investors are paying up to 20 per cent too much for second-hand policies

## Only one careful owner...

The second-hand market for endowments is growing rapidly, but buyers still need to be cautious about prices

Investors who prefer the moderate risk profile of with-profit endowments do not have to start a long-term saving scheme themselves, or buy a with-profit bond.

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but you can ask if they will share some of that with you.

Alternatively, it is possible to auction a policy on the internet through Endowments Direct, subject to a £250 sales commission fee.

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# Adopt a policy of no surrender



Between 50,000 and 60,000 investors who sell their with-profits plans back to insurers early do better on the TEP market. But life offices seem reluctant to advise their customers of this. Nic Cicutti reports

Market-makers in traded endowment policies (TEPs) want life assurance companies to tell customers about the existence of the second-hand endowment market.

They say that people who surrender their policies early, rather than waiting for them to mature, might easily do better by selling them on to a new owner. According to Christopher Dobie of Beale Dobie, a policy market-maker, prices on the second-hand market are, on average, 15 per cent higher than the often pitiful surrender values offered by life companies.

For people who buy the policies, the average rate of return is 10 per cent a year, using 1997 maturity values as a guide. But few companies alert policyholders to the existence of the market. Only two – Norwich

Union and Clerical Medical – routinely inform all policyholders wishing to surrender policies of the TEP alternative, says Tim Villiers, director of the Association of Policy Market Makers (APMM).

Clerical Medical includes the APMM's telephone number in the literature sent to surrendering policyholders; Norwich Union sends the association's brochure, which lists policy market-makers and details the types of policies in which they deal.

Other companies will sometimes reveal the information on a pot-luck basis – depending on which person deals with the surrender request, or make vague reference to the existence of the market in the small print.

Some, notably Standard Life, are wary of TEPs and will only acknowledge their existence to people who specifically ask for information. "We have some concerns about this market," says Andrew Black, marketing manager. "It's not really an issue for the seller, who may

indeed get a good price. But there is evidence that people who buy them are paying quite considerable premiums to their real value."

Mr Black concedes that this may be partly due to the perceived additional appeal of policies from mutual insurers – of which Standard Life is the largest – to carpetbaggers ("although people who say we're a likely candidate for conversion don't know what they're talking about").

But the main cause for concern is that second-hand prices relate to

past payouts, rather than reflecting the likelihood of lower payouts in the future, Mr Black says.

"This depends on where you think the responsibility lies," counters Mr Villiers. "If the payout is less than the asset-backing of the policy, does the moral duty of the life office lie with the original policyholder? The most common reason for them deciding to sell is because they need the cash. The companies should make sure they get as much as possible."

Mr Villiers also dismisses Mr Black's claim that the policies are too expensive. "They get a jolly good return, especially considering it is such a safe investment."

Policies suitable for sale on the second-hand market should be at least five years old and have a surrender value of at least £1,000.

According to Mr Dobie, the value of traded policies has jumped from £5m to about £25m over the eight years since Beale Dobie entered the business. But research by his partner,

David Beale, indicates that as much as £800m-worth of the policies offered for surrender each year would do better on the second-hand market.

This means that between 50,000 and 60,000 of the people surrendering direct to insurers would do better to sell to new policyholders, he says. "But most people surrendering aren't financially acute. About 85 per cent of all endowment policies are sold to support a mortgage and they are often their holders' only investment."

"The only solution we can see is for the companies to tell them. Every life office knows whether they would do better on the traded endowment market, but they don't say so. We've been saying to life offices for ages – at least two years – 'Come on chaps, why not tell people?' But, far too many do absolutely nothing."

"We've obviously got a vested interest in keeping the policy going," says Liz Watson of Norwich Union. "But we are also keen to look after the interests of all policyholders, including those wishing to surrender."

The Association of British Insurers gives information about the second-hand market in its free leaflet on surrender values, but says individual life companies must make up their own minds.

*The Association of Policy Market Makers: 0171-739 3949; Beale Dobie: 01621 851133; ABI: 0171-600 3333. This article first appeared in 'Bloomberg Money' magazine.*

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## Home truths about mortgage options

Can endowment mortgages compare with repayment schemes which guarantee to pay off loans, or PEP/ISA plans that can offer investors tax advantages?

£9,821 would be repaid after seven years and £17,055 after 10 years. If a person wanted to move to a new home at the same price, their next mortgage would take that repayment into account. Indeed, the rest of the loan would be paid off in just the same amount of time, with the same monthly payments as before.

While monthly repayments might have to rise if a larger mortgage is taken out, the same would apply with "portable" endowments: monthly premiums would go up. What is more, policyholders would usually be forced to start a new policy, paying a fresh set of initial charges, which suck a large proportion of premiums out of endowments in early years.

Mr Cartwright says: "I have always been sceptical of the so-called portability argument in favour of endowments. Repayment mortgages can be used flexibly and can be more effective than endowments in the early years."

However, defenders of endowment-linked mortgages point out that they have the potential not only to pay off a loan but also to leave borrowers with a lump sum to enjoy at maturity. Nor are combined payments that dissimilar to straight repayment loans.

Amanda Davidson, at

Holden Meehan, calculates that a 25-year repayment loan of £100,000, at an 8.7 per cent interest rate, would involve net monthly premiums of £795.77 a month, plus a further £14.76 a month in life insurance, a total of about £810.53. By contrast, an interest-only loan would cost £692.38 which, when added to an endowment of £164, would cost £856 a month.

Ms Davidson says: "You do pay more with an endowment. But as interest rates fall, costs begin to even out so that when rates are about 7.5 per cent, the cost of an endowment loan is roughly the same as a repayment one."

The difference lies in potential returns. With a repayment loan, you are guaranteed to pay off the loan and no more. With an endowment, the minimum guaranteed amount might be just £52,200. However, if investments grow at 5 per cent a year, the amount paid out would be £82,900.

If investments grow at 7.5 per cent, returns would reach £117,000. With growth of 10 per cent a year, returns would be £168,000. For the original £100,000 loan to be paid back, returns would have to average 6.3 per cent. Ms Davidson says: "It is not too unrealistic to assume growth on this scale."

Are endowments still a worthwhile investment in the age of personal equity plans (PEPs) and new-style individual savings accounts (ISAs)? Ms Davidson calculates that, assuming a 9 per cent growth rate, to pay off the same loan would require monthly payments of £143 into a PEP/ISA, including life cover. This would raise the total cost of monthly mortgage payments to £335, less than an endowment. Moreover, returns on PEPs and ISAs are not subject to taxation on the underlying life fund, unlike endowments. They are, however, more risky.

– Nic Cicutti

### Traditional life policy bonuses

Company	Annual bonuses				Terminal bonuses			
	bonus on sum assured	1996	1997	1998	accumulated bonus	1996	1997	1998
Beale Dobie								
Clerical Medical	2.50	2.50	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	9.5	13.5
Prudential								
GA Life	3.25	3.25	3.25	6.25	6.75	6.75	% based on sum assured	
Standard Life								
Scottish Friendly (tax-free)	4.00			7.00			4.5 for each full year	
Scottish Friendly	2.50	2.50	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.5 for each full year	
Scottish Life (tax-free)	2.25	2.50	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	22.5-160	
Scottish Life	2.50	2.50	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	22.5-160	
Scottish Mutual	2.00	2.00	2.25	4.00	4.00	4.50	37-172	
Scottish Prudential	2.50	2.50	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	7-122	
Scottish Widows	2.00	2.25	2.50	4.00	4.50	5.00	4.25	
Standard Life	3.00	3.00	3.00	6.00	6.50	6.50	% based on sum assured	
Tenbridge Wells FS (tax-free)	2.50	3.00	3.00	6.00	6.50	6.50	% based on sum assured	
Tenbridge Wells FS	2.50	3.00	3.00	4.50	4.50	4.75	% based on sum assured	
Average	2.50	3.00	3.00	4.50	4.50	4.75		
*Excluding first six months								

Source: Moneyfacts

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# Estate of the art

Road test Audi A6 Avant quattro, by Roger Bell

The perfect car? There's no such thing. One set of wheels cannot embrace all the incompatible attributes of, say, a classic Ferrari, a Transit van, a Rolls-Royce Seraph, a Caterham Seven, a Mini Cooper and a Land Rover – a fleet to satisfy most whims.

The perfect compromise, then? Now that's easier. A diluted mélange of the petrolhead's dream team is not so far-fetched. If you seek a car that's all things to all (well-heeled) people – a car more than passably endowed with comfort, refinement, exclusivity, fun, space, practicality, agility and freedom – look no further than Audi's mid-sized, V6-powered, four-wheel drive, A6 estate, officially known as the 2.8 Avant quattro.

Subtle changes in form and line have turned the latest A6 estate from a good-looking car into a stunning one. Few coupes are more glamorous. While

high style was a design priority, it's not been achieved by sacrificing much space. There are roomier luxury estates, but anything that can compete as a cargo carrier with Volvo's V70, even a C-class Merc, is not going to frustrate the heavy packer.

The Avant has a simple seat-fold arrangement that doesn't tax your strength or dexterity, and there's plenty of thoughtful detailing, including a ski hatch, tie-down eyes, an under-floor recess, a roll-up dog guard, even optional rear-facing seats. Only on rear knee room is the A6 found lacking.

So much for practicalities. But how does it drive? If not the quickest of the performance estates, the A6 quattro is

hardly short on pep (speed freaks dismiss with an automobilia-cating 140mph should wait for the faster 230bhp bi-turbo). Power comes from a 2.8-litre V6 engine that drives all four wheels.

Quattro transmission, manual or automatic, doesn't make the Audi a mud-plugging off-roader, but it does enable it to negotiate fields and slippery ascents that might beat ordinary cars. More to the point, 4x4 endows the speedy A6 with ultra-safe traction and handling. Every car has its cornering and braking limits, but nothing short of provocative recklessness is going to breach those of the A6 quattro. For grip, composure and security, this Audi has few peers.

There's more than a soupçon of com-

fort and plush, too. I found the cabin decor attractive, the front seats excellent, the suspension tolerably supple and the quietness impressive. The smooth engine emits no more than a muted hum, and wind whoosh – suppressed by well-sealed doors and windows – is low. In line with Audi's declared aim of taking on the grandees in the luxury sector, build quality is first class.

You will gather that I took a shine to the A6 Avant quattro. It has so much going for it, and so little against, I cannot name a better all-rounder, a more appealing dream-team compromise. Snags? Price for a start, though at £32,000 it undercuts Volvo's faster, roomier V70R AWD. Other than dashboard confusion – between them, the adjacent climate and audio panels account for more than 40 orange focal points – that's about it.

A great car.

Audi 2.8 A6 Avant quattro, From £31,780. Engine, 2,711cc, 30-valve V6, 199bhp.

Transmission: 5-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive. Performance: top speed 144mph; 0-60mph in 8.1 seconds; 26.2mpg (EC average). Rivals

BMW 528 SE Touring, from £32,900. The car Audi's 2.8 Avant must beat. High-profile prestige holdall with wide choice of engines, from 2.0 to 4.0 V8 – plus in-between diesel. Not the roomiest big estate, but one of the best looking. Great to drive. Mercedes-Benz E320 T Elegance, from £40,890. Big, roomy, beautifully made. Size and weight belied by punchy new V6 engine and nifty handling. High price offset by low depreciation. Volvo V70R AWD, from £36,780. Big, roomy, all-wheel-drive Volvo is very fast with 250bhp turbocharged engine. Only five cylinders but smooth and aurally uplifting. Fine driver's car marred by drab interior, boxy styling and thirst for fuel. Safe, entertaining handling.

Exterior car styling has improved enormously in the past few years, as manufacturers have started to throw away the traditional tin-box shackles (Ford with the Ka and the upcoming Focus, Audi with the A6, Alfa with the 156). The upshot is that our roads are now more interesting places. Sadly, interior design from the mass makers is (mostly) still in the dark ages. This could be why, although our roads are studded with perky shapes, motorists still look as glum as ever. After all, if you spend your whole time in a grey-plastic-swathed cabin, sitting on grey polyester seat trim whose only virtue in that it's hard wearing and doesn't fade when you leave it in the Arizona sun, it's hard to feel cheerful.

Car cabins are testament to the corporate cowardice of car bosses. They shy away from offering different cabins, for fear of losing customers. As always, the fear of failure is the biggest single drawback to progress.

Yet there is hope ahead. Volkswagen has extended its new "slush" plastic-moulding process to the latest Golf, on sale now in the UK. The result is a small, relatively inexpensive car with the quality of plastics usually found only in luxury cars. The Golf, in common with all Audis and the latest Passat, has dash plastics with a soft touch and a handsome grain. It instantly makes the cabins of rival small hatchbacks, such as the latest Vauxhall Astra, look cheap.

To encourage really big change, though, one manufacturer has to break ranks and be bold. This is precisely what Mercedes is about to do with its new Smart City coupé, the little two-seater rumour that will hit mainland European streets at the end of the year (assuming people buy it – many industry pundits still have their doubts). Its cabin is bright and cheerful, and it promises to do cabin design what Swatch did to watch design – an appropriate comparison, given that Swatch is the minority partner in the Smart car venture.

Changeable seat coverings are on the agenda. After all, why stick with the same upholstery for the life of the car, when it's so easy to zip off the old and zip on the new? That way, seat trim can be stylish and colourful, never mind that as with your clothes, you may feel like a change every year or two. This also allows much nicer materials to be used – linens and cottons, for instance, which are currently rejected by the motor industry because they're not as hard wearing as synthetic materials.

Looking much further ahead, Lancia unveiled a concept car at last month's Turin Motor Show, which sought to redefine car interiors by making them more like lounge rooms. It has a hugely roomy interior, and most of the space was liberated by ditching the conventional dashboard. Modern dashboards are throwbacks to the days of the horse-drawn carriage, when they protected passengers from splashes of mud.

On cars, they merely provide a cover for ugly wiring and ventilation trunking. They provide no other useful purpose. Modern, electronic instruments can be contained in separate panels around the windscreen; switches are better sited on satellites either side of the steering wheel. Renault is already some way to offering the dashboard-free car. Its latest Espace has a particularly low, attractive "dash" (trimmed in fabric, not plastic) that doubles as a large bag-carrier.

Mercedes-Benz has taken the concept a stage further. One of its recent concept cars ditched the steering wheel. You drive by joystick, in the centre console. Apart from appealing to young people, used to computer games, joysticks are considerably less bulky and safer than steering wheels – inherently dangerous things that frequently crush heads and chests in big accidents. Yet the steering wheel is just about the first thing the car designer starts with, when conceiving a new cabin. It is an upshot of always starting with what went before, rather than with what is best.



## Emission accomplished, as cars convert to gas

John Prescott suffered a minor mishap when manoeuvring a zero-emission, solar-powered Honda at a meeting of European environment and transport ministers in Chester two weeks ago. But the deputy Prime Minister still had reason to be cheerful: he was also showing off his ministerial Jaguar Sovereign V8, which has been modified to run on environmentally friendly gas.

Tony Blair is also alleged to have opted for gas power on his Chrysler Grand Voyager. Even the Queen is having some of her stable of Rolls-Royce and Daimler cars modified to produce 70 per cent fewer exhaust emissions.

Local authority fleets are starting to switch to gas, too. Humberside police uses 20 converted Protons. In France gas is half the cost of petrol; 15 per cent of vehicles in Holland run on it. So if the great, the good and the EU are going for gas, how about the ordinary motorist?

Glass's Guide points out that, apart from the environmental benefits, there are big financial ones. The November 1996 budget reduced the duty on liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) by 25 per cent and

Thinking of switching to a more environmentally friendly way to run a vehicle? You're not alone, as James Ruppert reports

### GAS: PROS AND CONS

#### Advantages

Reduced fuel bills, lower exhaust emissions (particularly with CNG), longer engine life, lower servicing costs, potential road fund licence discount, facility to use petrol means that drivers need never run out of gas – the oil-based kind.

#### Disadvantages

Reduced power output, reduced economy, loss of luggage space, few filling stations, especially for CNG, cost of conversion.

the last budget froze road gas fuel duty at 10.78 per cent, while raising the cost of both petrol and diesel by 6 per cent. At the pumps LPG costs around 39p a litre whereas a litre of unleaded costs 68p.

CNG is largely methane, like the natural gas that is piped into our homes. It fleet users it costs about 43p per litre. In a car it is stored at high pressure in a heavy tank four times the size of an equivalent petrol tank.

At the moment the only new cars available with this system are Volvos. The £22,930 S70 and V70 Bi-Fuels run on both petrol and gas. Overall CNG burns much more cleanly than LPG and also produces considerably less carbon dioxide. However, there are fewer than 20 CNG refuelling points in the UK, and although 60 or so government vehicles have been converted to run on CNG, LPG is the better gas option at present.

Commercial vehicles have been using LPG, which is similar to bottled butane camping gas, since the Seventies; there are more than 120 refuelling sites. Conversion costs for a petrol car average £1,000, half of what it would be for CNG. Also, the 1998 Budget, which of-

fered a £50 road fund licence for "clean" vehicles, could apply to LPG users.

However, the lack of filling stations is a problem, and so is the need for a 85-litre propane tank which in a medium-size car takes up most of the boot space. There are performance penalties, too: engine power drops by up to 10 per cent and fuel consumption rises by a similar amount on older carburettor models.

However, with more modern petrol injection engines the reduction in performance is hardly noticeable, and any penalty in consumption is more than compensated for by the lower price. If you typically spend £1,500 a year on unleaded, LPG instantly saves £658. LPG also prolongs engine life and results in a cleaner, quieter engine.

If you want to buy a brand new LPG vehicle there is a Ford-approved conversion at £1,595 plus VAT. Vauxhall is poised to launch dual-fuel versions of its Vectra and Omega 2.0 litre models at a projected £2,000 premium. However, the most common way to acquire an LPG-powered vehicle is to have an existing car converted.

According to Alan Cole, senior editor at *Glass's Guide*, "Developing an LPG infrastructure is the first hurdle to be overcome before LPG cars become a viable alternative in the UK, and this is why the manufacturers' most recent offerings to this emerging market concentrate on dual-fuel examples. There is no doubt that the current lack of a viable gas refuelling infrastructure is slowing the take-up ... Massive investment is needed from fuel suppliers."

It is possible to rent a tank. Calor can put a 2000-litre tank in your drive for £72 a quarter. Bulk supplies of LPG would then be around 20p per litre plus VAT. If you have gas pumped into your home for heat or cooking, there is no reason why you should not have a refuelling facility for your car.

That is something for the future. So even if Mr Prescott can't handle solar power, he must be relieved that gas guzzling now has a whole new meaning.

*Equipment and installation: Taylor Motors (01733 553031); Marine Eco Power (01590 688644). Gas and dispensing equipment: Calor Gas (0800 992200); Flogas (01530 230352)*

## MY WORST CAR: TRISTRAM PAYNE'S FORD FIESTA XR2



Somehow I found myself as the not-very-proud owner of a Ford Fiesta XR2, bought for the bargain price of £2,500.

To me it looked immaculate, finished in a distinctive metallic blue, and I fell for it hook, line and sinker. I didn't even bother to take it for a test drive, which was a big mistake.

As soon as I got into the XR2 I knew I'd made a terrible mistake – and just a few miles later it ran out of petrol on the motorway. That bad omen signalled that a whole load of problems were heading my way.

The exhaust fell off, the water pump went, and a load of other niggling failures got my back up. And its unreliability wasn't my major gripe. It was mainly that a Fiesta XR2 had no real character, or soul.

As a result I really never enjoyed driving it, and I slowly realised that it had no real power. I would accelerate and wait for something, anything, to happen. The handling was truly awful; you had to persuade it to go around corners, and I always felt as though it might fall off.

Worst of all, it was far too "boy racer", and that was not the image I was trying to project. I don't know why I didn't realise it at the time.

The one redeeming feature was the exhaust note, but that was only because I replaced the

Tristram Payne is co-presenter of Channel 5's 'The Car Show', a new series of which begins in June. He was speaking to James Ruppert.

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# Have some 'sarf respect'

London house hunters can pick up a bargain, if they're willing to head into Del Boy territory. By Fiona Brandhorst

When your salary won't buy you a piece of London in one of its trendy "villages", it's time to take a look at cheaper and, let's face it, less appealing parts of town. Forget the Tube, noodle bars and stand-up comedy, start thinking BR, Star Burger and Sky TV at the local pub. It's hard to imagine Plumstead and Peckham doing what Brixton and Clapham have done over the past few years, but there's a hungry bunch of house-hunters out there. Find a quiet backwater with a row of period cottages ripe for renovation, and you have a conservation area in the making.

Take Peckham, the poor relation in currently booming south London. After suffering for years under its Del Boy image, it is now in the throes of a massive regeneration programme. But it is "a property prices and transport links to the City and West End that are bringing new buyers into the area.

Trains from Peckham (zone two) take nine minutes to London Bridge, where the Jubilee Line Tube extension is scheduled to open a station next spring. By changing on to the Tube at London Bridge, it should be possible to be in Canary Wharf or Green Park from Peckham in under 20 minutes.

Lisa Shead, from the estate agents Charterhouse, believes pockets of Peckham will have their day in the not-so-distant future. "People have do homework and know which roads they want to buy in." Buyers as well as sellers have been pleasantly surprised by its rise in popularity. Prices start at £80,000 for an unmodernised three-bedroom Victorian house. Demand is not surprisingly, outstripping supply, pushing up prices further, especially in the leafy lanes of Nunhead.

Richard Lee, from Acorn estate agents, is seeing a lot of young professionals coming south of the river from north London, where they have been



Green London: Deptford may not be everyone's first choice of address, but more people are turning on to its charms

Photograph: Philip Meech

priced out of the market. "We're also getting the overspill from Clapham, Camberwell and Dulwich." Well-established conservation areas such as Holly Grove and Highshore Road are only minutes from down-town Peckham Rye station. Here, two-up, two-down cottages sell for around £110,000. Girdlers Cottage, a one-bedroom Grade II listed property in Choumert Road, was recently sold through the Halifax for just under £100,000.

"Cheerfully grimy in parts," is the *New London Property Guide* 98/99 describes Deptford, a mere 10cm to the right of Peckham in an A to Z. While Peckham may be world famous for the Trotter family, a tavern in Deptford is the Trotter family, a tavern in Deptford. They bought it in March for around £80,000. "We wanted to buy an old, ramshackle place, but we realised we didn't have the time, resources or inclination to do it up."

Their love affair with this former naval town started a few years ago, when they were renting nearby. "Its architecture, community feel and great heritage are the reasons why we stayed." Deptford High Street, which at the time of the survey was still under construction, has seen a huge demand for property in recent months, but

year, and the new Jubilee Line station at London Bridge will be a seven-minute journey from Deptford.

As always in these inner-city enclaves, the most pleasant roads border a piece of green, in this case Deptford Park. Here, three-bedroom Victorian terraces start at around £90,000, but scarcity is increasing their values. You're more likely to find a former local authority property if you're not tempted by one of the new developments down by the river.

Jasper Bark, a writer and performer, lives with his wife Veronica, a PR account director, in an Eighties three-bedroom, ex-council townhouse in the heart of Deptford. They bought it in March for around £80,000. "We wanted to buy an old, ramshackle place, but we realised we didn't have the time, resources or inclination to do it up."

Their love affair with this former naval town started a few years ago, when they were renting nearby. "Its architecture, community feel and great heritage are the reasons why we stayed."

Deptford High Street, which at the time of the survey was still under construction, has seen a huge demand for property in recent months, but

on the Greenwich and Deptford history trail, has been face-lifted by regeneration schemes. It's a true mix of cultures, with halal butchers, a pawnbroker and a Chinese acupuncturist sitting alongside a typical London street market twice a week. "It's a cross between a scene from Dickens and an Arabian bazaar," adds Mr Bark.

Trundle a few stops further south to Sydenham, and you will have left behind the inner city. While not exactly known for its nightlife, it does have a growing reputation for salvage and second-hand furniture yards. The zone three train service into Waterloo East (19 minutes) and London Bridge (15 minutes) will also link into the new Jubilee Line. George Proctor, an estate agent, is selling a two-bedroom Victorian cottage in Adamstrill Road, a short walk to the station, for £55,000. A double-fronted Victorian cottage in the conservation area of Halifax Street, with two bedrooms and a study, is for sale at £110,000.

Leytonstone in east London has seen a huge demand for property in recent months, but

it's not just the Central Line Tube that's making it popular. "That's always been a bonus," says Mike Moore of agents Spicer McColl, "but it's access to the M1, M25, M11 and Stansted and City airports that people want." Prices are between £75,000 and £120,000 for a three-bedroom Victorian house within walking distance of the Tube.

But for seriously cheap property, turn to Plumstead. Tracy Lockett, a graphic designer, was born in Deptford but went east of her roots, a few miles along the Thames to Plumstead Common, where she decided to buy a house earlier this year. The two-bedroom Victorian terrace "with fireplaces and sash windows but needing redecorating" cost £70,000. "I paid £10,000 more for the view over a park," says Ms Lockett.

Kathy Davies, from the agents Mann and Co, believes the Millennium project at Greenwich has put Plumstead on the map. "People who can't afford Greenwich are coming down the river to us." Three-bedroom period houses on the borders of Plumstead Common, a 15-minute walk from the station, will cost a maximum of £100,000 and start at around £75,000. Going by these figures, Ms Lockett has made a good investment. If convenience rather than a view is a priority, a two-bedroom double-fronted Victorian house minutes from Plumstead station (zone four) is on the market with Mann and Co for just £57,995.

Carpetbaggers of the property world need to study their A to Zs and go walkabout, preferably on a sunny day - dingy backwaters need to be seen in the best light. If you can get there before the estate agents start moving in, you'll have all the time in the world to watch your investment grow.

*The New London Property Guide* 98/99 is published by Mitchell Beazley (0171-581 9393). Agents: Charterhouse, 0171-252 9444; Acorn, 0171-771 6777; Halifax, 0181-299 3711; George Proctor 0181-778 9699; Spicer McColl, 0181-558 4021; Mann & Co, 0181-854 1181.



PENNY JACKSON

## A smart move in London

There are few addresses in the world with the kudos of Eaton Square, SW1. In a survey last year, leading London estate agents voted it the top location for houses and flats. In the smartest square in the smartest part of London many of the owners are too grand to even want their presence mentioned, and they don't move that often.

But now there is a chance to buy not only a new apartment, but one that takes the letter-head of No.1 Eaton Square. Four of the Grade II houses have been taken apart and rebuilt as 13 apartments by Grosvenor Estate Holdings. The Regency facade is of course untouched. So far the main interest is coming from the UK and from Americans already living in London. Apartments on 75-year leases start at £1.25m up to £3.25m, while those on 20-year leases are in the region of £500,000. WA Ellis and George Trollope are the selling agents.

A good address in London comes pretty high in the list of priorities for those coming to work in the capital from abroad. It is understandable why they should want to be in South Kensington rather than Stockwell, but if greedy landlords are overpricing their property - as Jacqueline Ironside, a letting agent suggests - then perhaps foreign tenants should take a less conservative view of where they live.

She says that a compromise has to be reached with the landlords in the end, since commuting is "too squalid, too expensive and too time-consuming to be a sensible option".

Since most London workers have to put up with commuter life to some degree, what better way for foreigners to get to know the real city than travelling on the Northern Line every day? Are they so timid that they cannot tell the central London landlords where to go and discover the pleasures of unfashionable London for themselves? Few people who have found themselves living in odd quarters of Paris or newly gentrifying parts of Madrid have any regrets.

The greatest problem facing estate agents is not having enough to sell. For the past year at least they have been urging tentative vendors to get into the market before it is too late. Sooner rather than later is the cry. Trouble is, unless you are buying as well, all those people who waited to sell have done rather well.

Saville Research, for instance, sees more growth in the South East, about 10 per cent next year. Owners with a good property in, say, Cambridge who were rushed into selling early last year might have lost out on as much as 25 per cent. Bidwells now have five buyers bidding for a Cambridge rectory well above the £700,000 asking price. They have 50 or 60 others waiting in the wings, so what could similar vendors expect in six months or more?

## Up, up and away to the high life

It's true that we are all in the gutter, yet some of us are looking at the stars. But for some the stars are definitely much closer. The vogue for apartment life has a big hold on British cities and with industrial buildings, schools and stations rapidly undergoing transformation into living spaces, the gutter is looking quite lonely these days. So why is living at altitude alluring?

Dieter Ralph fell in love with his Barbican flat at first sight despite the fact that he and partner Stephen Baldwin were looking for a suburban house with a garden at the time.

Their 29th floor flat in the heart of the city is surely as far away from suburbia as it is possible to get, yet its bucolic atmosphere appeals to Dieter. "It's a unique place to live, like living in a village community."

Does the hustle and bustle of city life ever intrude? "It's so quiet, particularly at weekends. On Fridays there's a queue coming out of the car park as people leave for their weekend retreats," says Dieter, who is surprised by the number of families he meets in the lift...

The high-flying home has other perks in addition to wonderful light and views. "Residents automatically become members of the Barbican association, with concessions to cinema and theatre tickets and there's even a good restaurant," says Dieter, who has adjusted to life in the clouds: "although friends can be nervous: 'They come round and say they can't bear to stand by the window, but after 10 minutes they eventually venture outside.'

Reading the blurb for apartment developments sprouting in every nook and cranny throughout the capital is enough to rouse the most dormant buyer. These are not mere homes

they are no extras. Was John tempted to choose a development with more amenities? "I didn't want porters because, apart from the cost, it would feel like living in a hotel. I belong to a health club so I don't need those facilities," he adds.

Some developments offer perks to those able to exchange quickly. At Metro Central in Elephant & Castle, London, fast-movers can choose from a range of extras which include free cable TV for three years or no service charges for a year.

Apartments are ideal for those with lives too hectic to include DIY. John's flat was fully finished, including tiles and carpeting, so he has had little to do apart from adding those essential accoutrements for the discerning single: dimmer switches.

High-fliers with aspirations for a penthouse, but dependant on a mortgage, should check lender policy. Many building societies impose restrictions and will not consider homes above a certain level. The Woolwich's policy is not to lead on flats above the seventh floor. "It's a grey area and we look at each property individually to assess its future saleability," says a spokesperson.

Living in the heart of the city brings easy access to work and entertainment but not everyone discovers village-like communities. John Tempest finds his location, down the road from the Imperial War Museum, handy for sightseeing when relatives come to stay, but has never met or even seen any neighbours. Perhaps it is not just the gutter which feels lonely.



Life in the clouds: Dieter Ralph fell in love with his 29th floor Barbican flat

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

# From pot pourri to pot roast

A taste of ... lavender  
from Norfolk, by  
Nikki Spencer

Lavender may be strongly associated with scenting clothes, but in fact it has also been used in cooking for hundreds of years – and is currently undergoing something of a revival. More and more chefs are using the pungent flower to flavour fish, lamb, sorbet and other foods, and this summer the New Covent Garden Soup Company is producing Potato, Leek and Lavender Soup for sale in grocery shops and supermarkets all over the country.

East Anglia is particularly suited to growing lavender because of its dry, light and sandy soil, according to Henry Head, managing director of the UK's largest commercial grower, Norfolk Lavender – although after the heavy rain last month he says that now he's not so sure. Dry weather from now until the end of July is the key to a good harvest. "I'd be very happy not to see another drop of rain," he says.

The family firm started growing lavender back in 1932, extracting oil for use in perfumery and drying flowers for pot pourri and

– more recently – for culinary purposes. The tea room at the company's headquarters at Caley Mill in Heacham sells lavender scones, lavender tea and lavender ice-cream, as well as jars of lavender marmalade.

Up on the coast at Wells-next-the-Sea, a passionate advocate of lavender in cooking is Carla Phillips, who runs The Moorings restaurant with her husband Bernard.

"Anything you can use rosemary for is pretty good with lavender, only it has more strength and vigour," enthuses Carla. She puts dried lavender (or fresh, when it's available) into salt water to flavour steamed fish, and uses it as a marinade with lemon and garlic on loin of lamb. She also makes an aromatic oil with lavender, steeping a sprig in oil with garlic and salt and pepper, to use a few weeks later on salads, or with mashed potato.

However, Carla warns against getting carried away with the idea of lavender as an ingredient. "Lavender is quite powerful and I

believe it works best when it is used subtly in savoury recipes. I think a sweet lavender sauce, for example, would be foul."

#### Lavender trails

• Norfolk Lavender, Caley Mill, Heacham (01485 570384) is open to the public, admission free, daily except Christmas Day. From mid-June to August you can see more than 100 acres of lavender in bloom by joining minibus tours of the fields (cost £3.95). From mid-July you can also see the distilling process, whereby the lavender is made into oil. As well as the tea rooms, the 19th-century mill has a garden centre and shop that sells dried lavender flowers for cooking. The company also runs a mail-order service (01507 466466).

• The Moorings, 6 Freeman Street, Wells-next-the-Sea (01328 710949) is open from Thursday to Monday. Owner and chef Carla Phillips has written a book in conjunction with Norfolk Lavender entitled *Herbs from a Norfolk*

Kitchen – available for £3 plus 85p p&p from Norfolk Lavender.

• Two other Norfolk restaurants that use lavender regularly are Congham Hall Hotel, Grimston, Kings Lynn (01485 600250), where the owner, Christine Forecast, grows more than 30 different varieties of lavender in her herb garden (open to the public daily 2pm-4pm, free); and Rococo, 11 Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn (01533 771483) where lavender and gin ice-cream is usually on the menu.

• The New Covent Garden Soup Company's Potato, Leek and Lavender Soup, made with fresh lavender flowers, will be available from 27 July to 9 August, price £1.49 for a carton.

Nectar of the Aztecs: in our article on chocolate, published on 4 April, we mentioned the Musée du Cacao et du Chocolat. Please note that the exhibition building – at 13 Grand Place, B 1000 Brussels – is currently undergoing refurbishment and is not open to the public until 1 July.

## GAMES

### CROSSWORD PUZZLERS OUT FOR A DUCK: DON MANLEY EXPLAINS HIMSELF

Some of you reading this article will have been guided across from the crossword puzzle in this week's *Is*. Some, I have no doubt, will be angry, some sad, and some perhaps even amused. Others may have hit this piece purely by chance.

The fact is that I have achieved – if "achieved" is the right word – something quite unusual, and have been invited by my long-suffering crossword editor, Louise Levene, to give an account of myself. In puzzle 149, published on 18 April in *Is*, I invited solvers to fill in some squares with clashing letters "to accord with the shape they make", adding that "a final mark should be added at an appropriate intersection of two grid lines". The shape (see *Is*) looked like a K knocked over. I assumed that readers would interpret it as a  $\pi$  (pi) and work out (perhaps following the hint in the puzzle's title "More or Less") the numerical differences between the clashing letters.

Thus, at the bottom of the pi the second I of IMAGINE in 26 down is three away from the second L of LILY at 41 across, so "3" is entered.

Progressing up the leg of the pi, we get 3141, then 592... along the top and 7932 down the bottom leg. When you add the decimal point after the opening

digit, you get 3.141592... the value of  $\pi$ . Clever stuff! Obviously too clever for all eight or nine hundred entrants.

Looking back, I can see that the shape of the pi is a bit inaccurate, and perhaps in my day job as a maths editor I am used to seeing too many hand-written approximations to this transcendental wonder. But surely the shape wasn't that bad, and a few mathematicians would have seen what I was driving at? Alas, I miscalculated.

There has long been a tradition of providing impossible or near-impossible crosswords. Two *Listener* puzzles spring to mind: in one crossword by "Afrit" in the Thirties or Forties, the publication expressed regret that none of its readers connected "Lombardy" and "Man of Words" with *The Cardinal's Snuff Box* at 28 across – a connection which some of us still fail to make; and about 20 years ago there was a puzzle entitled "Lip Service" by Leon, which involved playing a game of solitaire and spelling out the inscription on the Blarney Stone.

Afrit was a master working out the rules of a new game; Leon was probably too clever for his own good. So where does that place Duck? I'm in the

Leon camp, though I suspect Leon knew what he was doing. I guess that, despite over 30 years of setting, I didn't. I am as dumbfounded by the zero correct entries as the hapless solvers who failed to recognise the malformed mathematical symbol. But my feelings, to be honest, are mixed: I'm tempted to be excited at having fooled everyone, but reckon I should feel guilty at having spoiled everyone's fun.

Only two more things need to be said. One is that we need to explore the new and strange in crosswords to keep the game alive; the other is that no one should ever set out deliberately to produce a puzzle that will stump all the solvers. On that charge I plead innocent, so my apology to *Is* enthusiasts has some qualification. For most of the time, the setter must expect to be a gracious loser in a battle of wits in a contest that has a fair set of rules and conventions. That is how the battle is normally conducted in the *Is* puzzle, and indeed all the puzzles in *The Independent* and *Independent on Sunday*.

Don Manley contributes as 'Duck' to *Is*. His less-than-impossible puzzles appear weekly in the *Independent on Sunday*, in the guise of Quotz.

### PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Lord Grade, 91, film maker, producer, the Grade Company

We used to have races at school. I was a good, fast runner, but I never made it a part of my career. At the time, I had no idea what I was going to do, and certainly didn't know that I'd finish up in the entertainment industry.

If I could play anything, I would have liked to be a good tennis player. I had a house with a tennis court one time, but I wasn't any good, so I knew that it wasn't a natural thing for me. When you play

Tennis, you have to feel easy with them. I've tried golf, but unfortunately I just could not hit the ball, so I thought, why drive myself crazy? There's no point in anyone trying to play a game that they don't take to naturally.

When I was 18 years old I discovered the sport of dancing, and became an exceptional Charleston dancer. To begin with, I was a ballroom dancer. I wasn't very good, and it was hard to get a partner. But

when I started to Charleston, the girls were lining up to dance with me.

I learned to do intricate steps, because my father – as you probably know – was born in Russia. He was a very good Cossack dancer, and when I became a dancing act – which I was for eight years before I became an agent – I incorporated a lot of those steps that they do as Cossack dances into my routines.

I am still the world Charleston champion. I won the competition at the Royal Albert Hall on 15 December 1926 and I learned only recently that one of the judges was Fred Astaire. If I'd known he was watching, I'd probably have failed with nerves.

Grade Productions produced 'On Golden Pond' and 'Sophie's Choice'. Their latest film, 'Something to Believe In', was released in the UK yesterday by Warner Bros. Maria Paillo and William McNamara star with Tom Conti, Maria Schneider and Ian Bannen.

## CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

Of all the many changes that have taken place in the chess world over the past three decades – the schism in the world championship, the bad influence of rapid play events on the general quality of play, the pernicious effects of computer analysis and the introduction of the ludicrous Bobby Fischer Chess Clock among them – the one I find most depressing is the extinction of cheap chess sets made of French boxwood at the hands of an even less expensive plastic variety.

I say this not through any particular aesthetic delight at the tactile qualities of wood or a dislike of plastic itself. It's just the shape of the wooden knight's ears that I miss. The disappearance of the boxwood sets, you see, has deprived me of my one great claim to a place in chess history. For I was the first person ever, as far as I know, to pit an entire chess set on top of a single rook. And thanks to the despicable new plastic sets, that is an art that has totally died out.

You start with a rook (conventionally a white one, though black would, I suppose, be equally acceptable) placed normally on any square of a chessboard. The crenellations around its battlements provide the notches on which four pawns may be hung in a manner that allows the tops of the pawns to form the base for the next level.

Now comes the clever bit. Take two knights, two bishops and one rook. If you hang the knights' muzzles over the rook's battlements, you will find they stay in place. And they become even more stable if you tuck a bishop in under each of their bellies. (Point the two bishops in opposite directions for general stability.) The entire rook-plus-four-minor-pieces combination may then be balanced upon the four pawns on the original rook. Not only were the boxwood sets perfectly weighed for this to work, but the ears of the knight's pointed friskily upwards, left a four-point horizontal base for the next level.

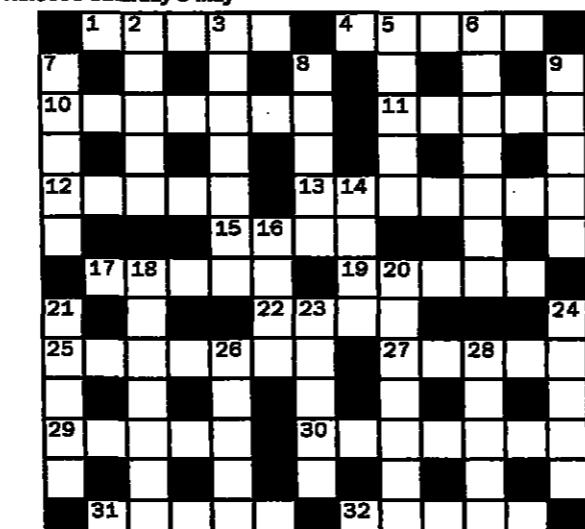
So another rook, two bishop and two knights are disposed of in similar manner, leaving us with two queens, two kings and 12 pawns. It's a little tricky, but you can get rid of two of the pawns between the ears of the knights. Delicately placed, they are light enough not to upset the balance, and their position becomes more stable when the next level is added.

Three pawns can be hung round each queen's head, again forming a level triangular base of pawn-tops for the next storey. At the very top two kings may be suspended by their crosses on those very useful crenellations of the final rook. The last four pawns may be balanced on assorted bishops, with one or two even on the topmost rook between the kings.

The execution of this fine pile took me most of my fourth year at Cambridge. Then the sets went out of fashion and my hope for eternal fame vanished with them.

## CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3606 Saturday 9 May



ACROSS

1 He-goat (5), 4 Broadcasting (2,3), 10 Stir (7), 11 Inexpensive (5), 12 Correct (5), 13 Make a list of (7), 15 Solemn word (4), 17 Convulsive movement (5), 19 Call to mind (5), 22 Long, bushy hair (4), 25 Masculinity (7), 27 Heat unit (5), 29 Rough hut (5), 30 First (7), 31 Burglar's tool (5), 32 Gemstone (5).

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 5 Wreck, 8 Anerding (Recommending), 9 Image, 10 Campaign, 11 Gun, 14 Spy, 16 Embark, 17 Estate, 18 fm, 20 Alone, 24 Snailpot, 25 Of, 26 Almita, 27 Nerve, 28 DOWN: 1 Birch, 2 Green, 3 Ideal, 4 Knight, 6 Rain, 7 Cottol, 12 Call by, 13 Mainland, 14 Sit, 15 Yen, 19 Namby, 21 Elder, 22 Spout, 23 Ex-par.

## BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer South

North  
♦8 6  
♥Q 10 5  
♦10 7 6 3  
♦K 8 6 5

West  
♦A 10 9 4  
♥9 7 2  
♦8 5 2  
♦7 4 3

East  
♦7 3 2  
♥9 6 4 3  
♦A 9 4  
♦A Q 2

South  
♦K Q J 5  
♥A K J  
♦K Q J  
♦J 10 9

Oh dear! I shall have to give up offering well-meant advice and stick strictly to reporting facts. This deal produced a peevish letter from a correspondent.

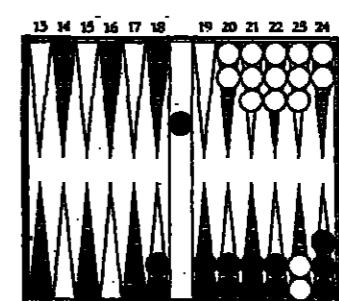
The bidding was simple: South opened Two No-trumps and North raised to game, West led ♦4 against Three No-trumps, obviously following my recent suggestion that the lead of a ten against a no-trump contract implied a strong suit with two higher honours. Dummy followed with the six and East (who had clearly noticed my other recent point, that rather than make an apparently useless attempt with near-garbage in partner's suit, it was more useful to give a count) thoughtfully played the two to suggest a three-card holding.

When ♦6 won, declarer still had two guards in spades and he attacked clubs. Now it was too late for the defenders to get a long card in any suit working and they came to only the four obvious tricks (a spade, a diamond and two clubs).

Yes, the lead of ♦10 defeats the contract when West ducks his partner's next spade return. Yes, East could have done everything that was necessary by covering ♦6 with his seven at trick one after which, again, West ducks the next spade return.

But the real culprit on the hand was declarer! Why? He really should have tried ♦8 from dummy at trick one – a play that could hardly cost and would have provided an unexpected third stopper in spades.

## BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



Here's a position that confronted Murray and Quickdouble Sharp at the Double Fives the other night. Murray, playing Black, had not only doubled early but had also accepted the redouble when all around him in the chouette had very sensibly passed. In his own inimitable style he had turned the game round to reach the position above. Should he redouble to 8?

The position is highly volatile and could change dramatically over the next two rolls. If Murray enters with any 6, White will be all but lost. Conversely, if he stays on the bar and White rolls a 6 then all the pressure will be on Murray. Most people have a natural fear of doubling from the bar against a 5-point board but Quickdouble is not of this ilk, and he redoubled with hardly a moment's thought. His opponent took; Quickdouble rolled 63 and comfortably won the game. The question is: were the double and take correct?

The answer is that this is an excellent benchmark position. Black should double and White should take. If White were any weaker, for example if he had only a 4-point, or if he had a blot exposed on his 6-point, then he should drop.

How do you evaluate this over the board? Black should note that if he rolls a 6, or he stays on the bar and then White doesn't roll a 6, he will become a prohibitive favourite, so now is the time to double. White should note that if Black doesn't roll a 6 and White does roll a 6, then he will have a very strong position. As this will happen nearly 25 per cent of the time, this gives him enough chances to take.

The final point to made is that success goes to players who are good at applying pressure. Quickdouble Sharp certainly did that in this position, applying exactly the right pressure at the right time.